Barcode : 2040100046798
Title - The South Indian Stage And Other Lectures
Author - B.Raghava
Language - english
Pages - 122
Publication Year - 1976
Barcode EAN.UCC-13
2040100046798

THE SOUTH INDIAN STAGE

AND

OTHER LECTURES

OF

BELLARY RAGHAVA

EDITED BY

K. DES[illegible]RAO

V. SR[illegible]A

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K. DESAPATHI RAO

V. SRINIVASA SARMA

September 1976

Published with aid from Government of Andhra Pradesh

Ten Rupees

Copies can be had of
V. Srinivasa Sarma
334/2 RT, Vijayanagar Colony
Hyderabad – 500 028

Printed at Avon Printing Works, Hyderabad.

PREFACE

Raghava gave the lecture on South Indian Stage at Mysore University. The lecture, Purpose of Art, was delivered by him during the Travancore, Festival of Fine Arts. South Indian Stage, Letters from the West, and Art and The People, were published during Raghava's life time. The Purpose of Art. The Role of An Actor, and Girisam Looks at Life, were found by us in manuscript form and are being published for the first time here.

The lectures and articles on art and life are relevant even to this day for they contain the unchangeable truth. Though they were conceived some decades back Raghava's ideas about art and life do not in the least appear dated. They deal with the legitimate in art and the inherent strength and weaknesses of human nature and behaviour. His views on theatre and the changes required in it are valid even now. The danger of the contractor's clutches on the theatre, about which Raghava was so much worried, has receded but amateur associations have not risen to his expectations. We still do not have a fullfledged theatre befitting our heritage, traditions, and the great size of our nation. Now we not only need a great theatre but infact deserve one. This we can achieve by following that great actor's spirit.

Sri D. Venugopalachari, a leading advocate of Bellary and son-in-law of Raghava, and Dr. P. S. R. Appa Rao, Director of International Telugu Institute, have given us the manuscripts. Sri N. V. R. Seshagiri Rao has guided us in the reading of manuscripts. Sri G. Subba Rao, Steno-typist, A. P. Industrial Infrastructure Corporation, has helped in copying the manu-scripts and preparing the press copy. Sri P. S. Moorthy, Accounts Officer, A.P. Sangeeta Nataka Akademi, has rendered great help in bringing forth this publication. We are much indebted to all of them.

EDITORS

We express our gratitude to **Sri M. V. Krishna Rao,**
Hon'ble Minister for Education and Cultural Affairs,
Andhra Pradesh, for the financial assistance.

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Raghavacharyulu. Tadpatri was also his family name but since he lived at Bellary he came to be called Bellary Raghavacharyulu. From an early age Raghava showed keen interest in the theatre. He used to see any play that was enacted in and around Bellary. He was first introduced on the stage in his twelfth year and within a short period he developed a discerning taste for acting and was even capable of criticising his own uncle and mentor Dharmavaram Ramakrishnamacharyulu who was a great Telugu playwright.

Raghava's early education took place at Bellary. Later he graduated from the Madras Christian College. His interest in drama was growing with him, and he continued acting in English plays. European professors at college were admiring his talent as a Shakespearean actor.

After graduation Raghava worked as a teacher in the Bellary Municipal High School for a brief period of two months. Leaving it he joined the Government Engineering department, but naturally these vocations were not satisfying to Raghava, a man of insatiable urges. Morcover they deprived him of his independence. His uncle Ramakrishnamacharyulu was a prosperous lawyer and this profession attracted Raghava. So, he went back to Madras and joined the Law college. Raghava was not able to pass the Law examination in his first attempt but in 1905 he appeared privately and succeeded in getting a law degree.

Soon after his return from Madras his marriage took place with Krishnamma, daughter of Lakshmanacharyulu, who was a lawyer at Kurnool. Krishnamma soon became known for her hospitality and kindness.

In 1906 Raghava joined as a junior to his uncle and continued till his uncle's death in 1912. Later on he practised independently.

Raghava's career as lawyer was a great success. Not withstanding this his first love continued to be the theatre. In 1906 itself he trained several young actors and staged a number of English plays and a Shakespeare Club was established.

Another great playwright Kolachalam Srinivasa Rao recognised Raghava's unlimited talent and invited him to take part in his Sumanorama Sabha. Raghava used to act in these plays along with his troupe. But this ultimately led to the decline of the Shakespeare Club and its activities. Rivalries developed between this Sabha and Sarasa Vinodini Sabha, organised by Ramakrishnamacharyulu. Inspite of the fact that Sarasa Vinodini Sabha was his uncle's, Rghava used to act only in the rival organisation. This continued even when he practised law as a junior to his uncle. Obviously his ideas about theatre arts were quite different from his uncle's. These differences, though vehement as they were, were not personal. Even when they both did not work together in the field of theatre their relations outside it were cordial. Raghava had his own ideas about the theatre and its development but they inevitably appeared unorthodox and westernised to his uncle.

Raghava was equally at home on Telugu and Kannada stages. At Bangalore, his plays, though most of them were in Telugu, always received packed audiences. As early as 1907 he acted in various plays under the Sumanorama Sabha banner where he became its leading star. Even before taking part in the Sumanorama Sabha repertory Raghava was well known for his roles in Sheridan's and Shakespeare's dramas. Raghava's first drama with Sumanorama Sabha was Sunandini Parinayam, an original play in Telugu, and for the first time he was acting in a Telugu drama.

In his early career Raghava had some disinclination towards the mythological plays and it was only by chance that he came to act in them. A play on the Mahabharata war by Sumanorama Sabha was in progress and, as was his wont when the Sabha

staged mythological plays, Raghava was sitting in the auditorium. The actor who was playing the part of Yudhishthira received calamitous news from home and abruptly left the theatre. Unless somebody replaced him the whole thing would end in a fiasco. Kolachalam went upto Raghava and requested him to save the situation. Naturally Raghava felt it his duty to save the honour of an organisation with which he was closely associated. Promptly walking into the green room he began his mythological characters.

Inspite of this Raghava was not inclined to take part in mythological themes. Later on he modified his stand and a change took place in his attitude towards mythological plays. Raghava weighed the impact of the social and historical plays on the masses as against mythological ones. He found the latter to carry the message more quickly among the people. Therefore he had to choose mythological plays which were infiltrated with relevant social comment. The message reached the masses quicker and appealed effectively. Whenever a change occured in his opinions Raghava never hesitated to publicly admit it. Raghava had to say this on the change of his stand about mythological plays : Religion is in the very blood of our masses and therefore any message will readily reach them through the established characters of our mythology. At least for the time being it should be the form to carry the message. But these plays must be written in a new way with a new interpretation that is relevant to our times and to our problems. We should have dramas that are powerful enough to bring a change and not those romances which appeal to the base emotions.

Ramakrishnamacharyulu died in 1912 depriving the Andhra stage of a pioneer playwright and actor. His brother Gopalacharyulu formed the Ramakrishnamacharyulu Memorial Company, a dramatic association to perpetuate his memory. Raghava decided to join this association. This and the rivalry between the two dramatic associations, Sarasa Vinodini Sabha and Sumanorama Sabha, ended in their own complete eclipse.

Raghava used to enact plays written by both Ramakrishnamacharyulu and Srinivasa Rao. His frequent visits to Bangalore and his performances there brought him close to the Kannada stage with which his association grew with years. Even today Raghava is as much venerated by the Kannada stage as the Telugu stage. Because of his friendship with the famous Kannada actor A. V. Varadachar, Raghava began taking part in the Amateur Dramatic Association of Bangalore, a pioneer and most popular dramatic association of the Karnataka theatre movement. This association was formed in 1909 and Raghava became its leading actor. He used to visit Bangalore frequently to conduct rehearsals for the plays and soon became the kingpin of the association and its activities.

This association conducted a Festival of Fine Arts for a week at Bangalore in 1919 and it was presided over by Rabindranath Tagore. For the first time Tagore was paying a visit to the South, and the achievements of the theatre movement spearheaded by the Amateur Dramatic Association and Raghava created a deep impression on him. Having seen Raghava's performances at Bangalore, Mysore and Calcutta the poet acclaimed him as the greatest actor of the country. The association between Tagore and Raghava continued further. An actor himself, Tagore knew the great heights Raghava had reached in the field of acting.

In 1927, during summer, Gandhiji went to Nandi Hills for rest and once visited Bangalore. At that time it was planned to stage Pundit Taranath's play, Kabir. So, they invited Gandhiji to witness the performance. Gandhiji agreed to stay only for a few minutes. But at the performance progressed Gandhiji stayed on till the end. Meanwhile Rajaji, who was beside him, reminded Gandhiji that it was getting time for prayers and Gandhiji replied that the drama itself was a prayer and at the end getting up he shouted 'Raghava Maharaj ki jai'.

Raghava was no stranger to the Madras stage too. There he was a member of the famous Suguna Vilas Sabha.

The popular playwright and theatre personality Sambandam Mudaliar and the critic V. V. Srinivasa Iyengar were intimately known to him. On behalf of this Sabha he acted in English and Telugu plays. The Fall of Vijayanagar was one of the many plays he enacted at Madras, and the Pathan character he donned in the play was highly appreciated. This play was subsequently proscribed by the British Government on the pretext that it was detrimental to the communal peace. One leading actor of Madras did not like to give Raghava his due place and believed that he himself could do better in the role of Pathan. So, he requested Raghava to show him how he did the role. Raghava did it not once but six times, each time differently and this artiste was stunned and grasped how inimitable Raghava was. To witness his performances at Madras fellow actors and admirers used to go there from far away places like Chittoor, Nellore and Guntur.

Though Raghava had been a popular actor for a long time it was not until 1921 that he performed in the coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh. He seems to have entertained some doubts about the tastes of the coastal Andhra audiences—that they wanted more music in plays, that they might not like his style of acting, and finally, that they were unruly in the theatre. As if justifying his apprehensions he did have some unpleasant experiences in the beginning. When one of his friends, Guduri Lakshmana Rao, invited him to the coastal districts in 1921 Raghava put up plays there. His first drama was at Vijayawada. To the music loving audiences of the place Raghava's acting did not appeal. Still he carried on his shows in all the coastal towns. These shows gradually influenced the actors there and many of them began to follow in his footsteps. Critics and fellow artistes started holding him in high esteem. Though Raghava's style of acting and his new ways of verse-reading were very highly appreciated in and outside the State he still felt something was lacking in the Telugu theatre. He felt change was inevitable to bring about a renaissance of the Telugu theatre. At that time western theatre was at the helm of its glory. In order to study

the ways of that theatre Raghava felt an urge to go and see it himself. Therefore, in 1928, he visited the Continent and England for two months. In the United Kingdom Raghava witnessed many plays by English and Continental artistes. Not only plays, but even rehearsals of these plays he used to attend and had a brief but thorough look into the various aspects of the theatre there. He also had discussions with the great actor and actress. Sir Forbes Robertson and Mrs. Robertson, Spanish actress and producer Miss Kitty Willoughly, well-known playwrights George Bernard Shaw and Sir Arthur Pinero, famous art critics Winston Churchill, Ashley Dukes and C. J. Grain.

Shaw dismissed the experience of the western theatre and commented to Raghava: Why did you come here to learn art? It is we that should go to the east to learn art, religion and poetry. Shaw was not satisfied with what the western theatre had so far achieved. Therefore he himself was seeking light from the East and its exotic theatre. Keeping his own understanding of the western theatre in view Raghava began attempting to convince people here about the changes that are necessary in our own theatre. He argued that our own theatre should portray the current problems of our society and suggest remedies. He said that our theatre should inspire life; young artistes should have facilities for proper training in the dramatic art; separate theatres should be built for enacting plays; women alone should play feminine characters; we should borrow stagecraft liberally from the West; acting should have more importance than music in a play. Raghava also decided to act more and more in plays with social themes. For this purpose he made Rajamannar* write a play, Tappevaridi, and he himself wrote Saripadani Sangatulu and staged them. Raghava insisted that family women with talent should take part on the stage. As a result of his persuasions several women came forward to par-

* Dr. P. V. Rajamannar is the former Chief Justice of Madras High Court and a noted social playwright in Telugu. He was also the first Chairman of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, New Delhi.

ticipate in dramas. To the orthodox it was a scandalous thing that women and men should move freely in the theatre groups. There was tumult but Raghava did not care to take congnisance. Only due to his unstinted support did Madapati Sarojini, Kommuri Padmavati Devi, Kopparapu Sarojini, Kakinada Annapurna and Varada Bai boldly come forward and bring glory to themselves and the Andhra stage.

In the early stages Raghava was strongly opposed to the introduction of music in dramas. But later Raghava seems to have reconciled to the place of music in plays, though not fully. The final acceptance was undoubtedly conditional. Raghava was quite justified in his suspicions because music was then, as even now, the most abused on the Telugu stage. But this should not be construed as hatred for music. On the contrary it was only due to his great love and respect for music that he fought against its abuse in dramas. If we just look back to the decade between 1920-30 and the state in which our own stage stagnated we could understand why Raghava put such particular stress on acting. It was not only in Andhra but in the whole of South India plays became musical concerts rather than occasions for giving scope to acting out human emotions. Raghava argued that the place of music in dramas was limited and the importance of acting should be paramount. His arguments with a missionary zeal finally had their impact.

Raghava believed that actors cannot be manufactured like commodities but it is necessary that an actor should be trained to understand the play properly and the talent dormant in him must be roused. To understed a character in a play, to imagine how one character should behave with another as in life, to know the meaning and sense intended by the playwright—to learn all these—it is necessary to have proper training. Raghava was greatly impressed by the work done by the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London in this direction. The developments in the art of bodily gestures there attracted him. Raghava anxiously sought to introduce these advances in our theatre as

well. In 1937 Raghava wrote a letter to Rajaji, then Chief Minister of Madras state, requesting him to provide opportunities for training actors at the Madras University.

However his proposal attracted the attention of the Andhra University. The University senate appointed a committee with Raghava and Sambandam Mudaliar. This committee prepared a syllabus and reported that unless sufficient opportunities were created for training and study of the dramatic art it would be futile to merely conduct examinations in the subjcct. For some reason or the other the University could not introduce the course in dramatic art till 1961.

Raghava entered films in 1936 with encouragement from some friends and acted in three films Droupadi Manasamrakshanam, Rytu Bidda and Chandika. But acting in films seemed to him too mechanical a process, what with the technical limitations that were only natural to the field then. Raghava felt that his style of acting was out of place in films and renounced his screen career. About Raghava's acting in films the famous shortstory writer Kodavatiganti states: I have seen Raghava rehearsing for Ramabrahmam's Rytu Bidda four times. Each time it was different. There are actors who act out a character a number of times the same way. But such a thing is not to Raghava's taste. Is not natural acting always an impromptu creation! Probably this is the reason why Raghava could not thrive in films.

Raghava came under the spiritual influence of Pundit Taranath, who was exiled from the Nizam's dominion in 1920. Taranath was of a great philosophical bent of mind and he established his hermitage on the banks of Tungabhadra and called it Premayatana. There he used to impart training in Yoga and Ayurveda. Taranath inspired many people from various states. Raghava collected funds with the help of his plays for the establishment of an Ayurvedic school there.

Raghava was as ardent in charities as in earning money. He used to spend thousands of rupees for social causes. Raghava founded a school for Harijans at Bellary which is still functioning. He used to move among Harijans without any inhibition and on festive occasions they were invited as guests to his house. These down-trodden people used to freely participate in the festivities.

Though Raghava was extremely liberal in spending huge amounts for humanitarian causes he was against pomp and frittering away money without purpose. To him it was not proper to spend more than twenty five rupees for the holy thread ceremony and two hundred and fifty rupees for a marriage. He kept up his ideal in deeds by celebrating two marriages, of his own daughter's and his brother's son's, with only five hundred rupees.

That Raghava never cared to distinguish between castes and moved along freely and dined with all castes supposed to be below his own, that he preached that women should not be isolated from the mainstream of progress—and his reformist views—antogonised the orthodox elders of his caste who excommunicated him. But how does it curb a man of his zeal ? Those religious zealots even tried to get him censured by a vaishnava Pithadhipati at Mysore. Some of his supposed well-wishers tried to convince him that his revolutionary ideas bode him no good, that he should renounce his ways and return to the established path. Some even threatened him with dire consequences. But all the same Raghava did not budge an inch. 'But indeed they put a spoke in the wheel of progress. Oh! these spooks of the past,' Raghava thought. He wrote in his dairy of that period: A true vaishnava has no caste. He *is* an outcaste. He can never become a true devotee until he has effaced caste altogether. But at last many of those who had slighted him became his ardent followers.

For the welfare of the actors, Raghava strove for an old age pension scheme but it could not be realised in his own time.

All the same he did his best by participating in several benefit performances in aid of ageing artistes. Only when he staged a play could an organisation earn funds. Unless it was beyond his power Raghava never declined a request to stage a play in aid of an organisation.

Raghava was as celebrated a figure in the legal circles as he was in the dramatic field. He was well-known for his unusual ways of cross-examination. It was a common occurance to see people coming from nearby places to witness his talents in court. His gestures and speech in court used to be like his acting on the stage, impressive and purposeful.

Raghava was appointed Government pleader in 1927 and was in the same position for nine years. The British government conferred on him Rao Bahadur in recognition of his talents as a lawyer, and Raghava did not accept it. But later the same title was bestowed on him for his services to, and excellence in, the field of drama. Though Raghava had enarmous income as a lawyer he never breached the ethics of his profession. Before accepting a brief Raghava used to study all aspects of the case to see if it justified his convictions as a human being. He was like a yeoman among lawyers, and from the poor he never accepted any fees for arguing their cases. Once a brief was accepted Raghava put all his efforts into it sincerely and worked hard to win the case.

In Raghava's opinion titles and medals were signs of hypocrisy. He never used his titles Natyakala Prapoorna and Rao Bahadur even on his letterheads. He dropped the suffix acharya from his original name which was a mark of respect to his caste and simply called himself Raghava.

While some critics said that Raghava was an adept in the depiction of equanimity and compassion (Santa and Karuna rasas), others admired his mastery over romantic, ferocious and tragic (Sringara, Bhayanaka and Vishada) moods. Each one—

artiste, crtic and scholar got what he wanted from him. To say that Raghava was adept in one and defficient in another is only due to the incapacity of the beholder of the colossus on the stage. Whatever be the nature, size and status of a character in the play Raghava put in his best, which was inevitably the best anybody could present. Raghava always used to improve on his own performance and that was why he was inimitable to the last.

When we say Raghava acted in his roles with complete devotion and understanding it should not be construed that he became one with the role he was acting by forgetting his existence. This is simply not to understand him properly. Raghava himself said about it: I would not deny that an actor may not become one with his role on the stage even temporarily. But a role is fully under the control of a true actor and he is not carried away by its emotions. Such an actor alone is capable of depicting emotions which are contrasting in quick succession. Such actors are of the first order. The lesser ones are carried away by their roles and are swayed by those emotions. How can they do justice to the roles they are playing?

Eventhough Raghava was taking part in historical and mythological plays his interest in social themes never declined. He used to encourage playwrights in Telugu and Kannada to write social plays. Many Telugu and Kannada writers used to approach him for suggestions and advice. Whether playwrights or actors, whoever came to him Raghava always encouraged and gave them help.

The egoless nature of Raghava was naturally attracted by the story of Visvamitra, who was charitable, sacrificing and persevering, but brimming with ego which took him thousands of years to become a Brahmarishi. Only when he got rid of his self could he attain it. Raghava thought of having a play around this. At that time he was planning to stage Tegani Samasya, which Raghava co-authored with Rajamannar.

Raghava was not in good health but his love for drama had not declined a bit and he used to participate in all the dramas of the amateur associations which called him. By that time he was 63 years. Raghava founded the Art Lovers League at Bellary and used to act in its plays. He always incurred loss on these plays in which he used to experiment with new ideas and his earnings as a lawyer were freely used to keep them going. He even used to pay salaries to the poor artistes from his pocket.

Even as Raghava advanced in age the hurdles also grew higher. But he was determined to stage the play Tegani Samasya and it was finally staged on 23rd March 1946 at Bellary. In about another fifteen days the condition of Raghava's health became worse and on 16th April at 11 hours 5 minutes in the night he passed away from the drama of his life.

Thousands of people followed him to the cremation ground on his last journey. His dress maker Ramanappa was not able to leave his dead master and carried an umbrella to shade the body. Raghava's intimacy with his friends and the down-trodden was such.

Efforts are being made constantly to benefit from the traditions and high standards set by Raghava and to improve upon them. About Raghava's greatness as an actor and lover of the drama time has proved beyond doubt; in the hearts of men who go to the theatre, and in the hearts of those innumerable artistes who have dedicated their lives to it Raghava is an everliving symbol of the dramatic art.

K. Desapathi Rao

V. Srinivasa Sarma

The South Indian Stage

A history of the South Indian stage may prove to be the history of South Indian life, South Indian society and culture. It is possible to conceive the stage as a church or temple where the human urges to strive after the useful and the beautiful meet to unite in happy wedlock. The purpose of a wedlock is, or should be, (with apologies to Mr. Bernard Shaw) the true conception of Truth, Beauty and Happiness. Drama may be considered as the ritual of this interesting ceremony; the dramatist as the High Priest who brings about the union in the interests of human progress; and music, painting, costumes and wigs as some of the more important supporters of the event.

The urge to strive after the useful is by itself an awakening of the spiritual consciousness in human beings; and if left to itself, unhampered and unfettered by the musty, mouldy, evil-smelling cob-webs of purdah-hidden convention and superstition, it is sure to find its mate and the result would be a song of joy vibrating with the rich notes of a triumphant life. Similarly the urge after the beautiful, in a natural state of progress, would bring one to the same happy destination. The precincts of the stage would be desecrated if the dramatist did not bring about this happy union. The function of religion itself may be conceived to be the translation of the useful into the beautiful and the beautiful into the useful. A great thinker says that religion is an art which equips human beings with creative faculties to sort, arrange, and rehearse the natural forces; and utilise the natural wealth for the production of first class plays for the edification of the very gods and goddesses.

The great *Bharta* is credited with having said *loka vrittyanukaranam natyam*. *Natya* is defined as dance with gestures.

Nataka (drama) is of course something more complex. If *natya* and its presentation alone should fulfil the purpose of reflecting or reproducing the world, or visualising the sublime and gorgeous play of reason, emotion, and volition which make up the real, genuine, living life how much more powerful a *nataka* could be, may be easily imagined. A *nataka* is a vivid inset photograph of the millions of thought-forms which are caused by human emotions, struggles and aspirations in their onward march, striving after the useful and the beautiful. To quote from the literature of the International Theatre Society, London: Knowledge of a people is best gained through its literature and the easiest form of literature to understand is the dramatic. A consideration of the South Indian stage, therefore, is a consideration of the South Indian people, their society and culture.

I do not profess to know much about the Tamil stage and the Tamil drama, except that I have witnessed a few Tamil performances in Madras and Bangalore. I believe I am fairly conversant with the Telugu and Canarese dramas and I have actively participated in the activities of the Telugu and Kannada stage for more than twenty years.

Origin of Indian Stage

I have no inclination whatever to dwell on the origin of things, as regards the Indian stage and drama. It is not always a healthy condition of the mind to glue itself to the pages of past deeds and past glories. Progress mainly consists of looking around and looking ahead. Looking back now and then may be necessary to assure oneself that the life-line is intact, is duly served and has not lost touch with the centre. Looking around and looking ahead are, however, more important in the interests of a society's progress. There are two more factors in progress, which make life really alive. One is the spirit of adventure and the second is the pace we adopt. A straight, steady and vigorous stride makes the progress exhilarating, and a spirit of adventure trains the power of vision to expand and galvanize all human

energies into a state of healthy activity. Proof of a healthy life is the presence of experimental impulses in its blood. A disinclination to consider the present and future in a fearless manner; a dread of casting aside the conventional blinkers adjusted by diabolical exploiters; a religious determination to shut one's eyes to naked actualities; a complacent holding back from the ring of life; seeking shelter with a convenient philosophy of *ahimsa* to avoid a clinch with the hard and ugly facts of one's existence; and a belief that religiousness is unthinking, unquestioning obedience to dogmas and platitudes—all these are indications that something is rotten in one's kingdom of intellect. Revolt is one of the birth-rights of human beings.

> Sure he that made us with such large discourse
> Looking before and after, gave us not
> That capability and God-like reason
> To rust in us unused.

That is what Hamlet says.

There is another evil factor in the calculations of this reign of human self-complacency. It is a morbid desire to place all weakness, disease and ruin at the door of external and objective influences. It cannot be denied that environment and circumstances play a very important part in the healthy growth of an individual or a society but the real cause of one's weakness and ruin lies within one's self, just as the real cause of one's glory and strength lies within one's self. External bacilli may attack and undermine the healthy growth of a society only when the white corpuscles of the society's life-blood have lost their vitality to resist attacks from outside. The real question for consideration would therefore be the cause or causes which lead to the impoverishment of the life-blood of society and its muscle-power. To blame external causes, without candidly analysing the internal ones, is not a correct way of diagnosis, and not at all the road to recover lost health. A general investigation into the conditions of the stage, however, would help us to understand the conditions of our society. As a great

thinker says, there is no surer evidence as to the character and fibre of a people than is afforded by the nature and quality of their popular amusements and especially of their drama. It needs no great effort to perceive that one who knows how to get the best out of a holiday knows also how to get the best out of a working day.

It may therefore be useful in the interests of the material and moral welfare of our society itself to consider in a general manner the growth and development of our stage and to consider it without any prejudices, and if I may call it so, without any 'practerito-mania' or the obsession of fancying that our ancients and ancestors knew everything, perfected everything and laid down the last word on every subject.

The Past

I have already told you that in considering the growth and development of the South Indian stage, I am not inclined to look back into the hoary past except to ascertain if the connecting chord or life-line between the centre and the present development is intact or broken. In other words, if the South Indian stage (to become accurate the Kannada and the Telugu stages) as we find it now is keeping in view the essential characteristics of such an institution and realizing its proper place, purpose and dynamic force as realised by our ancients in the evolution of our society on the lines of our *dharma*, culture and our philosophy.

Like all other arts, the dramatic art is essentially human and universal. This is an obvious proposition. Like all other arts the dramatic art takes its life from the emotional strata in human nature. The likes and dislikes of man find their corresponding forms in his expression of joy and pain. Like all other arts the dramatic art is instinctive in its inception. The volcanic power of suppressed instincts in human nature, reacting to the stimuli, either of pleasure or pain, struggles to express them outwardly in some form of delineation and the dramatic art does so by word and gesture. To the primitive man, expression of pleasure takes the form of dancing in joy and gratitude to the Almighty

for possession of the things he has desired; and expression of pain takes the form of weeping, crying, and wildly gesticulating in imploring appeals to the Almighty for a shower of His blessings. It follows therefore that the beginnings of the dramatic art should be found in religious demonstrations or exercises undertaken either for the purpose of thanksgiving to, or for the purpose of propitiating, the creator. Both involve a visualization of the creator's infinite powers, prowess and resources. When the first conditions of society appear, when the primitive man begins to realize that he is only a unit of the settled society, then a stage begins to take shape. If each individual lived for himself, there might not be any need for the institution of a stage at all. It is because men are thrown together or band themselves together to lead a corporate life that the necessity of a stage arises. Individuals left to themselves without obligations due to a society around would naturally give free play to their emotions and respond to all external stimuli without any check or hindrance. On the other hand, the moment an individual finds himself surrounded by society and realizes that he has some obligations to perform, the necessity to restrain his natural impulses to respond arises. He will be obliged to feel that he will have to regulate and moderate his natural impulses, if he chooses to keep within the folds of society. The privileges of a society react on the natural instincts of an individual. Similarly society will have a corresponding obligation to protect the interests of the individual. The aims and aspirations of a member of a society and the aims and aspirations of society itself begin to act and react mutually one upon the other. A well ordered society, therefore, requires a comprehensive mirror where the units can detect their faults *inter se* and the effect of such faults on the beauty and symmetry of the group itself. That comprehensive mirror is the stage. Any right thinking person perceives his individual weakness or abnormalities in a process of self-analysis. His faults or shortcomings, in other words, his natural handicaps against his spiritual or material progress are pictured before his mind's eye. Likewise the faults or defects of society as a whole will have to be detected and analysed before progress in the right

direction can be achieved. Such a mirror of society is the stage and such mind's eye of the society is its literature, chiefly the dramatic. The ancient *Aryans* carried this perception to its logical consequences and laid down that all the peoples of the world were members of one society; the whole world was a stage and the creator was the *jagannataka sutradhara* of this huge play. The highest knowlegde according to them is therefore to realize that the entire creation is a *leela* or the play of *Brahma.* The beginnings of such a view point are found in the smaller stage which a smaller society creates for itself, to train itself to achieve the desired end. Let us now examine a little more particularly how the stage and the drama serve the progress of society and its individual members in the attainment of this knowledge.

Firstly, the artist-actor acquires a talent of enjoying the unreal, fancying it to be real and a talent of experiencing pain, sorrow, misery and agony without his real self being pained, grieved or made miserable. The artist really enjoys the sensations of pain, sorrow and misery and learns for the first time that his real self can pass through a world of emotions and yet remain aloof and detached from such emotions.

Secondly, every actor begins to understand that it is the outward form, dress and colour that indicate inequality and that once the colour is washed away and the dress cast aside, such inequality disappears. A king is made to value the importance of a servant and a servant the necessity of a king. Perfect understanding and mutual trust and help should prevail in the management, else a king, in spite of all his majesty, will present a ludicrous spectacle and come to grief. An actor consequently learns that the laws of mutual respect and mutual help are necessary to harmonize the apparent inequalities in life and reveal the true and inner meaning of equality. There is yet another chapter of this lesson which reveals to the actor that ideas of birth-right, privilege and monopoly are extraneous, if not detrimental, to the well-being of a progressive society. One

assume a complex face, the original vital principles which governed human life were brushed aside or put on the shelf to serve the demons of avarice and self-aggrandizement in human beings. Instead of the idea of one joint life regulated by laws of harmony with equal rights or atleast equal facilities for the evolution of all, there arose the idea of the exploitation of the masses by classes. The instinctive urges were swamped and crowded out by the urge for storage and selfish enjoyment. The domination of the masses by the classes began and the stage was misused by the fortunate few for their own gratification. The wealthy and the leisured few desired to enjoy; and art, at the expense of others, always handicapped by poverty, was obliged to subordinate its free and natural expression and pander to the selfish tastes of its rich patron. The rich patron was never inclined to see life as it was and understand life as it ought to be. A faithful mirror would be inconvenient to him and disclose all his ugliness; so he wished for a magic glass which would conceal that ugliness. A severe self-analysis would be equally painful to his guilty conscience and so he desired a drama which revelled in imagery and repetition, and depicted life, not as life, but as a dream.

Literature, more especially dramatic literature, was used as a mechanical device for repeating things of a showy nature to tickle the besotted fancies of the wealthy and the powerful. Descriptive imagery and extravagant poetic fancies resumed the order of the day. The dramatist filled his works with inane rhapsodies over the elements, mountains, oceans and rivers and indulged in descriptions bewildering to a degree. Monarchs with miraculous powers, for whose personal convenience empires should be sacrificed, were made heroes. Women were depicted only as beautiful bouquets that could be placed in and displaced from the hero's buttonhole with perfect *sang-froid.* As *raja bhakti* was considered to be unquestioning and slavish obedience to the king, *pati bhakti* was defined to be a total surrender even to the brute in man—the same old plots, the same old imagery and the same old disregard of the larger life around.

Influence of Religion

It is in these days the dramatic art became what is called mythological. The priest contributed his own to this period. To maintain his supremacy over the moneyed and the powerful ones of the land, the priest began to cry down and denounce their ways. He condemned all indulgence in the emotional field (except the devotional) as sinful. He linked physical or outward renunciation with virtue, and the drama not sanctioned by him—he regarded as vicious. He favoured religious plays and gave his blessings only to entertainments which ushered in the gods and goddesses and their frolics, however high-flavoured they may have been. To wander with *Srirama* in the jungle or to encourage *Srikrishna* in committing the offence of theft, (if not crimes of a more reprehensible nature) was to make one-self sure of a place before the gates of heaven and to see *Anjaneya* use his make-believe tail for an unpardonable act of incendiarism was entrance into heaven itself.

The priest was the sole interpreter of the *puranas*, and the *puranas* were put forth as indispensable in the scheme of life to attain salvation. The actor in those days had to swim with the current. He indulged in outrageous music and still more outrageous dress and gesticulations. Who could say how the gods dressed, spoke, sang and danced? Certain so-called religious *ipse-dixits* were laid down for the guidance of dramatic art, and long-winded, superlatively descriptive recitals held the sway. Thus the stage in this period of the mythological art, where the classes ruled over the masses without the fear of the challenge; when the masses were kept in a state of pitiable and shocking ignorance by all the Machiavellian devices of the priesthood completely lost touch with real life and dramatic literature lost its rich musical strain and emitted a hollow croak of sickening sycophancy whose hall-mark was repetition. The dramatic art naturally became dead. No real art could thrive in a society where ninety-five per cent of the life is in a state of helpless stagnation. A good stage is an indication of a good society and a sincere actor is always a good citizen.

In the light of the above general observations, let us consider the growth and development of the South Indian stage during the last fifty years. As I have already told you, I am going to restrict myself to the Telugu and Kannada stages only. In the Telugu speaking districts, as far as I have been able to gather, there was no stage about fifty years ago in the sense in which we understand the word now (a place set apart for the purpose of a dramatic performance and fitted with a proscenium and curtains.) There were a few groups of players called *bhagavatula varu* who visited a few important centres and exhibited in action and dialogue a few incidents from *Srikrishna's* life as described in *Bhagavatam.* The incidents chosen were mainly, if not solely, of the pastime of *Srikrishna* with the *gopies*, *Satyabhama* and *Rukmini.* The actors were not more than four or five; the dialogue was long and burdended with innumerable verses and songs which were explained in prose ; and the action consisted in loud recitation accompanied by *natya* and symbolic gestures and gesticultions. It also appears that women graced women's parts in such representations. The themes chosen did not generally admit of any other *rasa* except *sringara* and *karuna.*

Veedhi Nataka

Later on what was called *Veedhi nataka* appeared, where stories from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were represented in a similar manner. In these performances, there appears to have been no attempt at any realistic effects or natural delineations. The histrionic art appears to have mainly confined itself to the copying of a set of rules framed in the *Abhinaya sastra* and nothing more. The real art, which is infinitely more than voice, more than elocution, more than recitation, more than gestures and more than even facial expression, does not appear to have been correctly interpreted. The stage was any place with any surroundings; the drama was only a representation of the epics in dialogue-form with aggressive music. Acting was only a form of recitation with conventional gestures, gesticulations and dancing; and the artists were a group of players who

eked out their living by pleasing their audiences. This appears roughly to have been the state of affairs before 1880.

Emergence of Telugu Stage

About 1880 a change occurred in the Telugu country with the advent of a set of players from Maharashtra who for the first time in the Telugu country used a stage proper with a proscenium, curtains and scenic arrangements etc. to present their shows. This appears to have caught the fancy of the Andhras and prompted them to start similar associations amongst themselves. Their first dramas appear to have been in Marathi or Hindi. We have relics of such performances even now in the Circars. We still hear of a representation of the gruesome story of *Peshwa Narayana Rao* in Hindi. The credit for the composition of the first Telugu drama proper must go to the late D. Rama Krishnamacharlu of Bellary. He was rightly hailed as the *Andhra Nataka Pitamaha*. His '*Chitra Neleeyam*', a book read in every house hold of the entire Andhra Desa, was first completed in the year of grace 1886. Mr. Rama Krishnamacharlu writes in the preface to his work that even as early as in 1879 he had taken part with a few of his friends in one or two representations in English and that the first play he wrote and finished was '*Swapna Aniruddha*' in Canarese. He states that he was not proficient in Kannada literature but that he was obliged to write his first drama in Canarese owing to the fact that his friends fancied Canarese to be the only language suitable for the Stage. In this respect he may have been influenced also by the advent of the *Mysore Rangacharlu Natak Company* Bellary in those days.

Subsequently, however, he turned his hand to writing Telugu dramas and gave us some masterpieces of which any literature could be proud. Mr. Rama Krishnamacharlu was a student of Shakespeare and had himself taken part (during Students' Socials) in the representation of some of the masterpieces of the immortal bard. He adopted a new and more rational method of writing and gave the drama a form and shape which held out possibilities for

expansion and progress. The dramatic association he started was called the *Sarasa Vinodini Sabha.* And the name of *Sarasa Vinodini Sabha* and the stage it created for itself will live down to posterity as the pioneers of the Telugu drama and the Telugu stage proper. It is about the same time between 1880 and 1890 that dramatic associations were organised in almost all the important centres of the Telugu country like Masulipatam, Rajahmundry, Nellore and a number of other places. Temporary stages were erected and organized after the fashion of the Maharashtra companies which visited such places. Dramas were written by renowned poets like the late Veeresalingam Pantulu and the living Chilakamarthi Lakshminarasimham Pantulu and artists of unparalleled talents like the late Lakshmana Swami of Masulipatam and the living Desoddharaka Kasinathuni Nageswara Rao Pantulu, T. Prakasam and Hari Prasada Rao of Guntur appeared on the dramatic firmament in shining splendour. I could give you many more names which added, and some of them are still adding, lustre to the Telugu Stage. But I should be taking up too much of your time, if I did so.

Kannada Stage

Similarly, as far as your beautiful province of Mysore is concerned, I have gathered from several articles written on the subject in various journals and magazines that the beginnings of the Kannada drama proper can be found within the last thirty or forty years. I learn that it was only after some Maharashtra Dramatic Company visited this place that the Kannada stage as it is took its birth. The magnanimous patronage which the rulers of this province have, from the beginning, extended to all artistic endeavours to have given the first breath of life to the Kannada stage in this province. The distinguished pundits of the state and its brilliant set of officers ably took up the lead given by the royal patronage; the drama and the stage were born, grew up, and throve in an atmosphere of dazzling artistic splendour, which gave birth to the late Varadachar of never-to-be-forgotten fame whose marvellous power in harnessing to his artistic chariot the splendour of the rainbow and the music of

the *gandharva*, whose princely and perfect artistic taste and whose magnetic charm casting a spell of wonder on the most fastidious critics of the times still remain unrivalled on the South Indian Stage. There are many more to be mentioned; but they are very well known to you and I need not repeat them.

It becomes clear, therefore, that it was only about forty years ago that both the Kannada and Telugu stages were founded for the performance of dramas written by scholars and pundits which were acted by artists of position and status in society; stages which boasted of prosceniums, curtains, side screens, green rooms and other equipment; where the question of lighting was studied with care; where competent musicians helped and supported the actors and which could boast of gate-money and an income. It should also be noted that most of the artists who helped the stage did so for the mere love of the art and lucre did not form the motive power. They danced because dancing was joy to them.

I do not for a moment forget that the dramatic art did exist before this period but such art was confined to crude representations in *veedhi natakas* and *yaksha ganas* which cannot be reckoned as stage proper as is generally understood.

If the Maharashtra stage was the parent of the Telugu and Kannada stages, the origin of the parent itself should indeed provide material for an interesting investigation. There have been several articles written on the origin of the Maharashtra stage. I gather that the origin of the Maharashtra stage proper is connected with one Bhave who started an association and erected a stage for the representation of his dramas under the distinguished patronage of the then Chief of Sangli. In 1843 Mr. Bhave's first performance *Seetha Swayamvar* appears to have been staged. Later on Mr. Bhave appears to have gone to Poona and Bombay, where (in Bombay) Sri Jamesetji Jeejeebhai and other distinguished Indians appear to have helped him.

art in that period was only mythological as described already or cultural, depicting life as it was and life as it should be.

Rama Krishnamacharlu

The history of the Bellary Telugu stage from the time it was started in about 1884 would make my point clear. The late Mr. Rama Krishnamacharlu started with *Swapna Aniruddha* in Canarese in deference to the then existing conventions. The dramatic art employed was purely mythological. Current life was millions of miles away from the theme. The dramatist was eager to please his audiences and nothing more. Next, his masterpiece *Chitra Naleeyam*, was finished and staged in 1886. The previous year had seen the birth of the Indian National Congress, and in *Chitra Naleeyam* we find a political question of some importance discussed, namely, the relationship between the rulers and the ruled. Mr. Rama Krishnamacharlu makes his hero proclaim in a fearless manner that even if a single subject of his starved for want of food, such a king's name was fit only for the bonfire. This was putting it a bit strongly but it proves the rise of questioning spirit in society. Again in connection with the second marriage of *Damayanti*, the poet introduces a shastric discussion of the legality of a second marriage for widows. The birth of the Social Reform Movement in society was reflected on the stage. Then we come to his *Sarangadhara*. Here the poet is found loosing his shafts against the cruel privilege conceded to the old men of our society; the privilege concerning lifeless and ill-paired marriages; the influence of the Social Reform Movement again. *Paduka Pattabhishekam* is another of his masterpieces. Even here the dramatist has no touch with current life and current problems. The citizens of *Ayodhya* rebel against the autocratic decree of *Dasaratha* in a most violent manner and are about to attack the royal household until *Rama* himself intervenes. This was a veritable innovation indeed in a society which was inclined to hero-worship a king who gambled and deserted his wife in a forest and to deify a king, who considered it a great virtue to gratify a piece of selfish vanity and sell his wife and child for

money. Mr. Rama Krishnamacharlu's *Pramila* marks a still greater advance. In the epilogue to the drama the poet lays down in unmistakable language the strongest plea in the cause of women's progress. I refer to two stanzas in particular. They state that society is free and flourishing only when its womenfolk are self-reliant, well versed in all arts and free in their own rights.

In his *Panchali* the poet introduces the question of the vicissitudes of a country which depends entirely on foreign cloth. In his *Chandrahasa* he discusses the propriety of a salt-tax, and so on.

I believe the Kannada literature and the Kannada drama are well bound in similar tendencies to keep in touch with current life.

It is clear therefore that the South Indian dramatic art, which was instinctive before the reign of peace and order began, subsequently took a mythological turn, sometimes owing to the influences of the previous period of sharp distinctions between the rulers and classes, and the masses; and later on it blossomed into a cultural art which is trying to keep in touch with current life and emerge out of the slime and mire of mythological stagnation that revels only in drama, hollow fantasies, lifeless repetitions and dead imagery.

The Four Needs of the Stage

Nevertheless the present pace of progress is slow and heavy. It lacks woefully the spirit of adventure. The reflections of the mirror are half-hearted and dim. There is a dread to indulge in more than an occasional glimpse of the evils of society. There is an unwillingness to tackle the problems of life in a fearless manner. There is a fear of subjecting the old conventions and old ideals to a bold criticism. There is reluctance to question the place of the old dramas and old themes in current life. There is a tendency to persist in conceiving the stage as serving to satisfy only the urge after the beautiful in man. We are loath

to consider that the stage is also meant to serve the human urge after the useful. The present South Indian stage is still brimful of all the idiosyncracies of the present state of society.

To start with, our stage and drama clearly illustrate that the average South Indian, at any rate among our masses, has yet to realize that time is money. Time is of no value to the ordinary stage-goer or the artist on the stage. Consider the fashion of calling on one's friends irrespective of time, place or any previous appointment whatever. Consider the time spent in needless non-essential ceremonials. You will understand that we faithfully adhere to our indifference to the economy of time even on the stage. Our people do not care to go home till morning. The management is more particular about the intervals than the scenes, so much that there is usually an interval of half an hour even before the commencement. Our dramas are also written with a sublime disregard of the facilities for representation of the scenes in quick succession.

Secondly, the proprieties of a place are not a strong point with us ordinarily. My clients would like to consult with me even when I am getting into my bath-room. Any roadside, any broken pial is just as good as any other place for any business, even for the settlement of a marriage dowry. Likewise the average stage-goer and the average actor are supremely indifferent to the fitness of the scenic arrangement to the event. He will arrange the *Nandana vana* with electric lights and a general post office post-box thrown into the bargain. I have read that in a Chinese drama a broken chair represents a forest. We may not be so bad as that, but our forests are devoid of all true life and are provokingly bare. You will also observe that most of the important events of our drama are transacted in a street represented by a curtain with paintings of palaces and, a light-house. The king meets his minister in the street. The captain drills his regiment there, and the lover meets his sweetheart there also.

Thirdly, our society refuses to realize the importance of mutual cooperation and team-work in life and we see this philosophy abundantly illustrated on our stage. Each actor looks to his own exaltation. After a show, he would never ask his friends "how the show went off" but only "how did I do it"? A combined rehearsal is a matter of no consequence whatever. The stage is for him and not he for the stage. This is a great evil, the root cause whereof lies in the degenerate system of the philosophy, which preaches individual emancipation. In the long run, it will be found that the very idea of individual pleasure and individual gain is a fallacy. The idea of individual emancipation in religion tends to jeopardize and weaken the impulses of collective work and affect the spirit of civil consciousness. It is the religious outlook of a community that mainly enriches the soil from which spring the various forms of activities. It is not a healthy form of religion or philosophy which teaches man to think of himself as separate from others and pray for his own betterment and his own salvation independently of the society to which he belongs. Many a dramatic association in South India has failed owing to the absence of this virtue of collective outlook.

Fourthly, and above all it is not a hyper-critical minority but a very large majority amongst us, that still adhere to the view that the stage is only a place of popular amusement. Amongst the masses this is a common belief. The sacred purpose of the stage in the scheme of life and the important place it occupies in maintaining a healthy and progressive condition of society are not yet felt keenly by most of us. Even among some of the so-called advanced amidst us, there is a subconscious feeling that the atmosphere of the stage is low, irreligious and not quite respectable. For instance it is this feeling which mainly stands in the way of our women coming upon the stage. I recollect to my mind what Srimati Sarojini Naidu said, when in 1921 she opened the second Festival of Fine Arts organised by the Bangalore Amateur Dramatic Association. If you believe that the stage is an effective kindergarten system of education in

eternal truths and virtues; if you believe that the stage is meant for a simple and easily understandable interpretation of human emotions, human experiences; if you believe the stage is meant to reflect life as it is and try to forecast life as it should be; if you believe that the stage is meant for a scientific analysis of the burning social problems of the day and their solutions; if you really believe (as you who pose as holding advanced views, really profess to do) that the stage is a factor — an important factor—in an effective scheme of education of the masses, I cannot understand why women should be denied a place in this system of education. You will agree that the home where ordinarily the women rule, is the centre of education. You all agree that primary education should be compulsory and the best of authorities in the matter agree that a woman with her tenderness and powers of gentle persuasion is the best instructor for the young children; then why refuse her a place on the stage, the great kindergarten school of education for the masses ? You have after all recognised a woman's right to ride a bicycle, a horse, drive a motor car, take part in the deliberations of local boards and preside over the destinies of a legislative council; then why make a wry face when she wants to go on the stage which you profess to believe to be an educational institution ? A Telugu sister of mine, a poetess, has recently contributed an article in verse to a magazine published in Madras. She deplores the advent of woman on the stage and lays down that a woman's grace and virtue consist in fighting shy even of her husband. A friend of mine (I shall not mention his name) who professes to take a good deal of interest in the cause of women's advance (by the way I don't like that expression—I hold that woman is always more advanced than man), has sent me the cutting referring to it in terms of genuine appreciation. Do you want such a woman—I don't mean the poet—a woman who would consider it outside the bounds of propriety to stand straight before her husband and smile at him or would you have a woman who, like the *Satyabhamas, Kaikeyis, Subhadras, Samyuktas, Queens of Jhansi* of old, can lead Indian armies to win back freedom and glory to our land ? If you would like to have the latter type of women

as your friends and workers on this bigger stage, why deny her due place on the smaller stage ? I can think only of one reason for this inexplicable attitude and that is, there is still a subsonscious mentality in most of us that the stage is only a place of popular amusement, associated with jokes, buffoonery and low tastes. A distinguished young sister of mine, in the Educational Department (I shall not say where) once told me that her department would not like her to take part in any dramatic activity, however respectable the particular stage environment may be. I believe it is not so with the Mysore Educational Department and I do hope that the Mysore University will soon recognise the stage as part and parcel of its active education.

This is an important matter. If the stage is only a place of popular amusement and nothing more, our expenditure on the stage must be curtailed at all costs. We cannot afford at present to spend large sums of money for purposes of amusement for the sake of amusement. Amusement which does not carry with it the ennobling and elevating impulse of real joy is mere waste. Even from the point of mere relaxation, the present stage is ruinously expensive and detrimental to the moral and material well-being of society as well as an individual.

Aim of Drama

Consider the enormous amount of money we are spending yearly for the stage and cinema, and consider if the return by way of amusement is proportionately reasonable. With the type of theatre we have and with the long vigils in the night, the stage is not even conducive to the health of the actor or the audience. In our present condition of life and society every pie is precious to us. Every ounce of energy we possess is precious to us. Nay every thought is precious to us. Poverty and weakness on the one side, the consequent mutual dissensions and strife on the other side are heavy handicaps in our work of national regeneration. We are all eager to bring back to this unfortunate land its ancient glories. We all cherish an ambition to win back

to our dear motherland her lost jewels of gold and diamonds. It is therefore necessary to economise and conserve our vital energies and use our resources to the best advantage. Not a pie should be spent, if its return does not add to our national work in some way. Let us be honest. If we are prepared not to deceive ourselves then none else can deceive us. Let us be honest, I say, and fearless. If we feel convinced that the stage is an essential factor in the growth of our national progress, let us be prepared to give it all the honours due. On the other hand, if we decide that the stage is meant only for a kind of recreation let us boycott it mercilessly; for it is proving such a heavy drain on the purse of the country.

I know of our poor people pledging their cooking utensils for the sake of attending *Mahatma Kabir* or some other well-known drama. And what is the return? Why does *Mahatma Kabir* attract such large houses? That discloses another powerful reason for the asphyxiate condition of our stage life as well as the life of our society. It is this strong smell of religiosity with which the average Indian always tries to surround himself. He must have his gods and goddesses to dance on the stage. *Srirama* must come down from on high and inform the audience that the world he has created is a rotten affair and that he would hold an examination to test the strength of his devotee. The great *Hanuman* is not allowed to take any rest after his arduous labours in carrying the *Sanjiva Parvatha*. He must carry a ton of ghee to help the burglarious feats of *Kabir*. No one asks as to why *Kabir* should sever his son's head from the body. Was he not willing to help the course of justice? Was *Kabir* ashamed of the act and wanting to screen his son's identity from the police? The average stage-goer does not want to think about such things, for it is enough for him that he has seen *Srirama* in a Parsi Theatre costume and actually heard him talk and sing too. I have actually witnessed many people get up and fold their hands in adoration, when *Hanuman* with his machine-worked appendage jumps on the boards. Poor *Hanuman*, he dedicated his whole life for service. He had no time even to marry. Nevertheless he must give a patient ear to our

implorations and bless the childless with children. This obsession of religiosity—religion is a quite different thing—is a great barrier in the path of our progress whether on the stage or in our life.

What is the reason for the present state of the South Indian stage (Telugu and Kannada) which took shape some fifty years ago in such splendid circumstances, patronised by royalty, manned by distinguished men of letters and service, possessing an excellent repertory and managed by amateurs who were filled with progressive ideas ? What is the reason for such a stage to exhibit such signs of weakness and disease at the present day ? Is it only a condition of arrested progress our stage is exhibiting now or has it taken a step in the backward direction ? I have a positive apprehension that our present day South Indian stage has retrogressed in a marked manner. The country is swamped with professional companies whose object is money, to earn which they are deliberately exploiting the undiscerning middle class men of the country, occasionally the great masses too. The work so ably and splendidly begun by pundits and amateurs fifty years ago was soon discovered by the profiteer's greedy eye and his itching hand closed upon it. He presses into his service glittering tinsel, showy dress and glaring colours to attract and fascinate the uncultured stage-goer to whom the theatre has become a land of wonders. What does the ordinary stage-goer know of historical accuracy in dress ? What does he know of the realistic touch in painting and what can he understand of the properties of place and light ? Garishness pleases him and all that glitters is gold to him. Dramatists were caught hold of and ordered to write mere 'thrills' for the audience. Dramas, neither historical nor logical, were written for the sole purpose of giving 'thrills'. In the alternative all the ten *avataras* were called and recalled to fill the pockets of the management.

Place of Music

Above all there was the introduction of music as a necessary element in the drama. The poor Indian stage-goer fairly collapsed before this allurement. Thereafter the play-goer was a

blind moth and nothing more. Who does not know the strength and fascination of music ? And the profession began to use the magic spell of music to draw large houses and enrich itself; kill the true histrionic art and blaspheme the stage and its sacred purpose. I am ready to concede that music also is a great factor in the field of education but I have no hesitation in stating that music has very little place in a regular drama. The profiteer would fill his stage with music and its peculiar charms—music usurped the place of the art of acting., I know even some of the famous art-critics amongst us often mistake good music for good acting. I can straight away give you several instances where some of my very good friends have made grievous mistakes in the matter, but I choose to be discreet. The damage wrought by this element is so complete that even the progressively-inclined amateur is obliged to seek the help of music to keep the wolf from the door. The booking office will enjoy a blissfully quiet evening, if there is no music in the drama. And what sort of music do we get ? Very weird indeed. The Parsi Theatre and some *Natak Mandalis* are to be thanked for the grotesque music that we are enjoying now. A *Savitri* is to be represented in a devotional mood. There a song would not be out of keeping in a devotional mood. There are many fine old strains of *Purandara.* The management however finds no charm in them. Something novel, something exotic, should be pressed into service to tickle the artless play-goer. They find the Parsi stage ready to help them.

That is the type of our stage-music now, and it is exhibited by the king as well as the servant, the young as well as the old, by man as well as the snake in *Harischandra,* and even poor *Visvamitra,* who created worlds, is no exception to this rule.

Another step in the backward or wrong direction is the ushering in of boys' companies and children's companies on the stage. This is a dire evil. It is quite a wicked and sinful type of profiteering and exploitation. If the stage is interpretation of life, what justification have we for encouraging such companies?

How can children and boys interpret life ? How can a mere boy depict the love of a *Subhadra* or the struggles of a *Ramadas* in training ? Further, do we realize the tremendous subjective changes and adjustments that are caused by emotions either real or simulated ? Do we realize the care and guidance which are essential in plunging youthful minds into the surging waters of deep-seated emotions ? How can a management, whose sole concern is the income of the booking office, take any real interest in the moulding of youthful subconsciousness ? The best a management can do for its boys is to arrange for their marriages so as to give complete satisfaction to their parents. Is not society, as a body, responsible for the welfare of its boys and girls ? Are we doing the right thing in encouraging such companies ? This is another matter for serious consideration.

A Time for Change

It is time therefore that we took some real interest in the South Indian stage, to begin with the Kannada stage in this province. Four things are necessary for the stage to live and thrive. The first requisite is the drama. The second requisite is a body of trained actors and actresses who can correctly interpret the drama. Thirdly we require a theatre to give a proper setting or the necessary environment for the combined effect of the dramatist and the artist; and last but not least we require society in its entirety to patronise the proceedings. The man in the street, lane and even the blind alley should be made to feel that the stage is a very necessary factor in his life.

An English critic states that out of 200 first class novelists, you may not be able to find more than one writer who has the talents to write a good drama. The dramatist, as you all know, has to surmount peculiar difficulties of composition before he can produce a perfect work of art. A whole life-time perhaps will have to be condensed and crowded into a few hours to portray a few incidents of importance in the said life. A novelist can take the reader from China to Peru and Peru to China without any effort whatever. He can devote pages of his

book to describe his hero, his heroine and their pleasures and sorrows. He can give you an invitingly attractive description of a good dinner. The dramatist, however, labours under disadvantages. A drama is essentially of action and the time is limited. Descriptions will generally be out of place in a drama. Grouping of several persons in a particular chapter is the easiest thing for a novelist; whereas a dramatist, if he is a real artist, will think twice before he can write a scene which requires grouping. Again with a few lines of explanation a novelist will assemble his characters from the remotest corners of the globe and work out a successful finish. The dramatist's task is difficult in working out a natural ending. I have often met with extraordinary difficulties in representing a murder or even a natural death on the stage.

The ordinary dramatist is hopelessly grotesque in such circumstances. You will generally find an impassioned speech, a string of verses or even a song written for the occasion which usually call for claps from the audience. If the problem of a dying man is hard, the problem of the bystanders is still more difficult for the dramatist. Even the mere technique of a drama, therefore, presents considerable difficulties and a successful dramatist requires good literary and artistic skill. I think that the expression *natakantam sahiti* emphasises the point. As a matter of fact, however, we find that any and every person who has some command of the language (Canarese or Telugu) who can quote to you some *sastras*, and manufacture some verses and songs fancies himself to be a dramatist. In South India, dramatists and art-critics quote themselves by hundreds. This is not as it should be. Good dramatists must be found and encouraged. The thinkers and leaders of the society have a great responsibility in this matter. A still greater responsibility is that of making an organised attempt to get proper dramas written; dramas which discuss problems of life and suggest ways and means for the betterment of our society in future. Political leaders, social reformers, legislators and even philosophers, should press the drama into their service for the propagation of

progressive ideas. A drama should on the one hand reveal to us the main springs of our racial genius, racial activity and racial glory of the past; and on the other hand, it should present a graphic picture of all the excrescent growths which are at present stifling the free life and growth of our society. We were great—granted none can deny it. What was it that made us great? Was it only a spiritless obesrvation of external conventions and *acharas* that made our ancients great or was it something dynamic in their very philosophy and character that helped them to dare all and achieve all? It is this something which was, and still is, in the very blood of the Indian, that our drama should try to portray by giving it a form, colour and voice. Let us be done with kings, who forget their wives, kings who abandon their wives, kings who sell their wives, and kings who sacrifice their sons for the sake of *ekadasis*. By way of a change let us have monarchs, who take a little more interest in the material welfare of their subjects and who can solve the problems of good for the starving millions. Let us also be done with *mahatmas* who worked miracles. Miracles beyond conception are being actually worked now by modern science and for once let our dramas teach our society to realize the power of human effort and human endeavour.

This philosophy inculcated in *kayena vacha* is known to every man, woman and child in India; but let us not forget that such philosophy could only be chorus for untiring energy and fearless work. If the story is true, it is *Kabir* that worked miracles. *Kabir* himself is alleged to have answered it by saying 'love for all' irrespcctive of sex, caste, creed or colour. Utter fearlessness is the bed-rock of such love. Let our dramas put before us that spirit of fearlessness in thought, word and deed which made the *Aryans* great, which helped *Visvamitra* to create new worlds and which alone would now help us to break down all barriers of near-begotten customs and conventions, which stand between us and the law of infinite love. Let our dramas talk of our life, real life as it is and as it should be in future in the joint family of the worlds. Representation of life need not necessarily mean

the painting of the actual common places. Such incidents in the life of the characters may be taken as can help the audience to associate themselves with present conditions and at the same time educate them to look forward to the future. Incessant chantings of abstract truths are not dramatic. If the chief purpose of education is to manifest the divine in man, i. e. help a human being to evolve into the divine; the drama which is unrivalled in its power of persuasion should best fulfil the purpose. To sum up, dramas which conduce to waste of time and money, where the monotony of music, colour and plot is appalling, should be severely left alone, (if not killed out-right) and such incidents should be dramatised to provoke the experimental and creative impulses in man.

Having found a true dramatist and getting the correct types of drama from him, we should be ready with a trained body of artists who can well and truly interpret the said drama. We ought to have an academy of dramatic art. The art of acting, as Ashley Dukes puts it, is greater than the actor. Oftentimes, I find myself thinking that acting, real acting, may not be an art which can be taught. I have always found it extremely difficult to teach acting.

One can easily lay down the artificial limitations of acting on the stage. One can easily define the conflicting interests between time, place, the audience and actors.

One can feel, and perhaps express, what is not good acting. That is all. I am not sure, however, if acting, great acting, could be taught. I had the privilege of discussing the subject with Sir Johnston Forbes Robertson and he stated as follows: an actor cannot be made. The art is or is not in him or her. You can only fertilize the soil. And he told me that when he first appeared on the stage people laughed at his seriousness; and his great instructor Phelys rebuked him of not being able to control his feelings on the stage. One at once sees the cultural training required for a good actor. I had the good fortune to see the work done by the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London.

In the first place, membership of that body is not a thing to be applied for. It is an honour conferred by the Council on distinguished artists and literary celebrities. The course is divided into six classes. In the beginning, training in physical exercises like swimming, riding and fencing is given. A regular *diksha* is insisted for physical perfection. I was present when competitions were held for students of the fourth or fifth year class. An ordinary situation like the perplenities of a husband during a period of strained feelings between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law was asked to be represented by groups of actors, without any words. By gesture, look and gait, the competitors had to draw a picture of the situation before the examiner. The work of the Academy is recognised by the London University and diplomas are granted to the successful candidates. Many of the rising stars of the present stage in England are said to be the products of this glorious institution. Why should not we have a *gurukula* where the psychology and philosophy of the art of acting is taught and the soil is fertilized for the growth of great artists?

Amateur Companies

Let us look at our picture now for a moment. Take the amateur companies; training is left severely alone. The first serious attempt at rehearsal is only on the stage during the first night. Go to the professional; he is slightly better in this respect; but he is more partial to the elements of music, dress and scenery. In London I attended several rehearsals, especially of the International Theatre of which I am a member. The seriousness of the several actors trying to learn was something foreign to my experience of the South Indian amateur stage. The art of acting is real to them. With us, in seven cases out of ten, it is love of the self and not love of the art that takes a person on stage. It is a matter of personal exaltation and nothing more. In an amateur association the man who furnishes the funds or occupies an influential place in public life, would always demand an important role. It is his privilege. If he is denied the said part, sure he will start a rival association. These are

matters which are well known to you all—the root cause of this weakness may be due to you all. The root cause of this weakness may be due to the fact that we have no organised institution to create an atmosphere of pure love of the histrionic art and provide facilities for the growth of real artists amongst us. Why should not we have a Faculty of the Dramatic Art ? It is for you to consider the question in all seriousness.

National Theatre

Next the question of the establishment of a National stage or a National theatre for the combined play of the dramatist and the actor should be carefully and immediately considered. The necessity of such an institution is obvious. Apart from considerations of health, sanitation, light and acoustics, the theatres we can boast of now are not fit places for the development of the art. Art's fragrance is nowhere near such houses. The stage as well as the auditorium are absolutely devoid of any association with works of art. The auditorium reminds you of a ware-house where music, painting, and such other innocent babies are murdered and given no quarter. The stage walls present a number of holes, cracks and chunam daubs and nothing more. The green-room is a misnomer. It makes you cry. The smell of rank perspiration is all the inspiration of art you get there. The dressing arrangements are simple and primitive. Huge piles of dress without any idea of assortment are thrown out and the first comer gets the first chance of grabbing at anything he fancies. There is nothing whatever in the green-room to suggest to you the colour of the skin or the mode of dress which is befitting your part. A gentleman past middle age, who once upon a time took a woman's part is installed there and he is an authority and an encyclopaedia in the green-room. The wigs and crepe hair are a bewildering mass. Water and soap are luxuries only for the very high in the cast. Come to the stage—be it a forest, palace or street or even the celestial regions, the painter's name in good modern English stares you in the face. The arrangements for lighting are still more fanciful. Either the actor is placed

completely in the dark or a stream of blinding light is thrown on him, bathing him once in pink, once in red, once in green and so on. The amateur is too poor to build a good theatre and the professional is too shrewd to spend too much of money on such things. It is necessary that there should be a national effort to construct a National theatre. Works of art should fill such a place. There should be a small museum attached to it, to give an idea of ancient dress, ancient costumes, ancient weapons and ancient conveyances. There should be a research room attached to it to make experiments in the art of colouring and lighting. There should be a library of the latest dramatic works of the world. There should be paintings of all our great artists; musicians, painters, sculptors and actors, whose expression could inspire the actor with the right frame of mind to react to the surrounding environment. I know all this requires money—it does. Once again let me repeat my statement : let us be honest and true to ourselves. If we honestly believe that the stage is a potent factor in the scheme of our national education, let us fearlessly ask our rulers and leaders to budget as much money for the stage as for the other educational places. I hope the members of the Mysore Senate will take up this question for consideration. If on the other hand, (I beg pardon for the repetition) we hold that the stage is only a place for amusement and not instruction, let us put a stop to the enormous expenditure on such things either by legislation or otherwise.

Lastly, the most important work is to carry the correct notions of the stage, drama, and histrionic art to our great masses. It is only the upper and lower middle class men that can afford to attend our so-called theatres now. The poor villager can hardly afford to pay for such entertainment. To him the *veedhi natakam* or the *bayalata* is still the only form of stage and it is no source of education whatever for him. Here is a field for good work by the Municipalities and Local Boards and also amateurs. Associations of trained actors should be maintained or helped by the various Municipalities and Local Boards, and they should be asked to carry a correct type of drama to the

village. Interesting dramas on health, sanitation, temperance, cooperation, team work inculcating our national life, dramas on the evils of untouchability, dramas illustrating the principles and advantages of Hindu-Muslim unity should be staged by trained artists in all villages. Consider how this would be a most successful way of enlivening and enriching our rural life. We can logically claim progress only when the great masses behind wake up and show signs of life.

In his letter of greetings for the New Year the great Sir Johnston Forbes Robertson writes to me that drama is the great peace-maker of the world. It is true the drama is a great peace-maker of the world. It is the best medium to give life to our society and to our people. It is a religious belief with me that it is our stage that will rouse our masses and lead them on to take their place in the comity of nations. It is my firm belief that the stage and the art of acting not only educate society, but also help the artist in his struggles of spiritual evolution and finally make him realize his divinity.

Bellary T. Raghava gave this extension lecture at the University of Mysore in 1930. In the same year it was published in the magazine of the Mysore University.

The Role of an Actor

Today is a very auspicious day. The sun is in conjunction with *makara* (crocodile). We all know that in our planetary system the sun stands for the eye and light. Knowledge, therefore, is the attribute of the sun. *Makara* stands for strength and perseverance. It never lets go what it holds fast. The significance of the conjunction therefore is that we should adhere sincerely, steadfastly and perseveringly to the knowledge we gain from experience. Unless this combination exists true progress cannot be maintained. To speak on the role of an actor on such a day as today, is to have a reawakening of our position in life and our duties towards our fellow creatures.

One must try to understand precisely the role of an actor. I am reminded of the famous speech uttered by Jacques in the Shakesperean drama "*As you like it*". He says "All the world is a stage and all the men and women are players", etc. This is a grand truth and any deviation from the truth, from the realization of the truth, would plunge human beings into the morass of self-attachment and self-aggrandizement. Real knowledge transcends this environment and understands the self in a higher and nobler light. The self is but a part and parcel of the universal self as all other selves are. The role of an actor therefore becomes clear. It is one of moving in company with the other actors for the glorification of one and all. The actor should consider his role to be a part in the whole and for the success of the whole.

The actor and the philosopher belong to the same category. Both are useful members of a society. Self-discipline is the gospel of both, though the actor lays special emphasis on self-restraint. The world at large, and the theatre-going public in particular,

equally turn up their noses against the philosopher and the true actor. The world cannot accommodate itself to the stern principles of the philosopher who preaches "To give is to Live". Nor the common theatre-goer can appreciate the actor's ideal "To give up is to live up". To merge oneself into the finale is the true actor's ideal. His role to him is part of the drama as a whole. If the other actors fail in their duty, if the drama as one entire piece drags or suffers, the true actor feels his own part to be a failure. Ordinarily a recognized actor is indifferent to the success of others, if his own display is applauded. The general theatre-goers and critics cannot travel beyond the orbit of the "star posing and the hero proposing". To get back to the analogy of the philosopher and the actor, it should be noted that no philosopher can sink to this level of the cheap and common plane. Even so a true actor cannot climb down to the level of playing to the rable. Human welfare is the mission of the philosopher. The awakening of the minds of the masses is, or should be, the guiding star of the actor. To achieve his object, a philosopher should live like one, and the actor should love life—the universal life—for a definite purpose and such purpose should be the centre of his life.

One such purpose is to develop good and correct taste in the man in the street. Not only his taste for good language should be improved, but also his taste for correct dress, department and carriage and chiefly his taste for loftier and nobler aspirations of life. One of the present day slogans is to raise the standard of life. I wonder if more is meant beyond the material outlook of one's existence. To take coffee without the use of the saucer, to break an egg without soiling your neighbour's dress, to use a second class or first class closet in a decent manner or to eat without making weird noises, these are not the be-all and end-all of human existence. They may be neccsary to give a sort of elegance to material comforts. But life's purpose and the actor's role are based upon other things. They are based upon a sense of service; a sense of the necessity of a general march and general progress; a sense of carrying others with oneself; a sense of the

annihilation of individual happiness and individual exaltations and self-glorification; and a sense of leading others to glory. On an earlier occasion I have said that the Sanscrit word *abhinaya* has its root-meaning in the word *neeng,* which indicates that an actor should be a leader of the theatre of the society. A leader should be highly cultured. *Bharata* defines an actor as a *kritesh,* a pandit and *pratibhasavan,* a man of resources. An actor should have the makings of a radiator. Here is a snag. I have seen and known a few actors, who radiate sexual impulses, who radiate vulgar instincts and who radiate impulses of the common place. An actor should be able to get inspired by ideas of service and sacrifice and be able to lead the audience to a deep realization of life's purpose. An actor's role is to awaken and stimulate in the minds of the masses a sense of divine beauty and divine splendour and divinity in sex also. Actors, whose eyes are glued only to the collection-box; who care only for personal glorification; who mercilessly trample upon other's lines and push their own stand to the lime-light; who exploit their own figures to strike admiration into the audience never understand the noble art of acting at all. They are mere wage earners. They merely depend upon the costumier's crafts and the musical accompaniments to deceive the public.

There is no one to criticize them and put them in the correct way. A famous American author says that most of our present day critics should be named critikens, because they are ready to bow to and bolster up their own favourites. He says that uninformed journalism has done more harm than good. To a very large extent, the evaluation of acting is dependent on the modern publicity demon. The cinema has added to the strength of this demon and women promiscuously become stars.

The first handicap in the histrionic field is the drama itself. In the world at large, the drama is woven by the all-powerful and all-merciful creator whose one purpose is the happiness and salvation of all. The creator of the stage drama works on different lines. His purpose chiefly is to please an individual

actor who feeds him. He creates only such environment as would give the best opportunity for his favourite to display the personal attraction of his musical talent or any other stunt. While the actor's role is considered to tickle the masses, win a few 'once mores' and rouse up the critikens to invent titles; the author's role is to create a stage for the actor's special benefit Thus the author and actor create a world of their own, which has a separate orbit of its own. The earth travels round the sun. Knowledge puts the modern actor's planet travel round money-bags and slums of vulgarity. The real actor and his role is miles away from the modernist. The author and the actor both travel in a vicious circle quite ignorant of their legitimate roles.

Therefore the first obstacle should be overcome by the author. He should realize that he is the creator of a world. He should equip himself accordingly. Now-a-days no equipment appears to be necessary. In *Mudra Rakshasa,* the famous *amatya* in bewailing his lot, which is a hard one, narrates the difficulties of his life. He has to protect the kingdom from external trouble and internal dissensions. He has to protect the poor from the ravages of the rich and the rich themselves from their avaricious diseases. He has to provide food for the destitutes and orphans. He has to prevent epidemics; and take measures to circumvent droughts. The minister adds that only a drama writer can realize such a trying ordeal.

The play-wright has an enormous task and he should possess the more enormous equipment to write. Such a well-developed drama requires an actor of vast learning and intensive culture, to present the characters to the audience. Let us examine the actor's world. We may feel a bit disappointed. The cultural equipment most of our actors possess is not sufficient to fill a woman's powder bag. Most of our players have no vision of Indian culture and our ancient traditions. They have no idea whatever of the progress made in other countries. Their ambitions and aspirations are nil. Their outlook on life is confined to the contractor's purse, the complimentary ticket-

holder's appreciation and the claps of the unthinking rabble. The goods they offer are, as Hamlet says that learning a passion to tatters and mouthing the lines as town-cries do. They will scoff at the advice to beget a temperance and smoothness in the torrent, tempest and whirlwind of a passion. Their chief aim is to catch the next contractor's eye. How can such persons fulfil their roles on the stage. As I have indicated before, the mission of our roles in the world should be realized before we can successfully do justice to our roles on the stage. Without realizing the grand purpose of life in the world, how can anyone understand the grand purpose of life on the smaller stage. To realize the grandeur of the histrionic art an actor should make the stage the centre of his life. He should attain the heights of feeling that he is not acting at all. Playing to the gallery is not his role.

Man in the Street

A second obstacle in the field of drama is the impression that the masses are incapable of anything and any progressive movement. This impression is based upon ignorance and defective perception. Time and again the man in the street has proved that he is capable of not only understanding great truths but is capable of great sacrifices and great deeds. Apart from the fact that an actor's role should have its own high standard, it is ridiculous to put forward the argument that the minds of the masses are unable to catch progressive ideas. Such an argument is blaspheming of the divine potentialities of a human being. But this obstacle is put forward by several actor-friends and acquaintances of mine to justify perhaps their own existence. Even vulgarisms are courted by such actors and almost all producers, to play to the lower self of the mass mind. I came across some producers of the screen-world who were persuading the director to begin the shooting with a very fat man entering the temple *dwaram* while a very fat woman was trying to get out and both meet on the threshold and find the *dwaram* too narrow. The director protested; but the company of producers insisted on the ground that the scene would please the audience. Another

great director, a cultured man, set up a correct and high standard in his first production. The picture was not a money spinner. Suddenly the producer sought the usual slums of cheap fame and plenty of money. I protested. The producer smiled and said "Dear Acharlu, your ideas, though good, have no money value. What am I to do? The producers and actors look to the box-office and nothing else. The contractors cannot think of anything else.

On the one side, the religious sense of the minds of the masses is based on the conception of the idea of the meaning of life in its material prosperity and its future. The minds of the masses, accordingly set up an ideal satisfying that view. Any drama or arrangement which reaches that ideal is good and appeals to the minds of the masses as it is. What is good to them may not be favourable to the progress of society. The idea of personal enjoyment for its own sake is very sweet and agreeable to the minds of the masses. The nature of enjoyment is largely moulded by the taste of the masses. The more primitive the taste, the more the need for the dramatist and actor to descend to the level of the demand. Consequently, the contractor and the actor vie with each other in pandering to the tastes of the masses. The presence of the really sensitive and cultured people is problematical. It is true that a few complimentary ticket holders grace the theatre; but for obvious reasons, they indulge only in a smile and a good word. The critics or the critikens have their favourites as the rest of the audience, and revel in their puranic-mindedness and have no clear vision of the dramatic sphere. They are not dramatically minded at all. Here the actor's role has a tremendously potent possibility. He should realize that he is a leader and forward-goer.

Injuring Public Taste

An actor's role is the same as that of a philosopher, a politician, a statesman, a social reformer, an industrialist, a teacher and a sportsman. I eagerly look forward to the time when actors and actresses can rub shoulders with the highest in

the land with self-respect, self-reliance and equanimity of temper. It was published in the papers the other day that Mr. Aseef Ali had missed his vocation as an actor. He has more poise than pose. That is the role of an actor. Man's career through life should be to steer clear of all attachments. An actor goes through his part in the play, free from any bondage to pain or pleasure. The present day actor, however, is hammered in a triangle whose three sides are the contractor, the rabble's applause and the critiken's news-report. He cannot soar above this confine because he has not developed the wings of culture and hearing. If any new thing is put before him the deficiencies of the masses is glibly trotted out as an excuse. By such excuse the actor is not only insulting his role but injuring public interests. Just as on the bigger stage of life, a human being who misses his role becomes a sick vehicle in the train of human progress, even so one who cannot well and truly realize his role becomes an offensive and fostering ulcer in the body of the play. There is no more ridiculous argument than that of the ill-equipped mental condition of the masses. It is the actor's role to educate the masses to raise the level of their taste, to awaken the creative instinct in their minds; to make them grasp the divine potentialities imbedded in them; to realize that the chief characteristic of love is strength and not lamentation; to raise the masses to the level of leaders; and above all to listen to the voice of God. The voice of God will not be heard till the voices of Mammon and self-glorification within are subdued and suppressed. The actor who does not understand his role acts out of tune with nature and at best converts himself a mere poser, a bad trickster and a huge fraud on society.

Take the rabble who witness a cricket or foot-ball match. They understand and appreciate a late cut, a leg glide, a neat passing and a straight drive into the goal. How did they acquire the capacity to appreciate a good game. They do not care for the result as for the game itself. They acquire this merit for they do get the chance of observing a good game. Even so, give the unthinking masses a chance of witnessing, the true actor

and his role, the audience will be inspired in no time. I am reminded of an incident. *It was in a theatre.* A great, rather well-known, actor was playing the hero's role. The scene was a forest at midday. I was in the audience. A village *magistrate* was sitting in the chair by me. The hero was describing (in a verse of course) the intensity of the heat and the merciless severity of the sun. All through the verse he was gazing at the sun for full three minutes. The villager suddenly asked me "Sir, can any one gaze at the midday sun for such a length ? " I was astonished. I entered into a conversation. I was surprised to find my neighbour was not at all well-read and did not boast of any culture. The mass mind can think. The actor's role is to provoke such thinking power in the mass-mind and to lead it to form correct ideas of good drama and a good actor. The actor who tries to trade upon the ignorance and the undeveloped mind of the masses is, to put it modestly, a traitor to society and progress. Civilization is a dead letter to him. It is said that vested interests are a barrier to the fulfilment of civilization. Such vested interests are a danger to the easy and rapid flow of the current of human activities. Civilization conveys an idea of the sum-total of all such activities. A dramatist and an actor who ignore the grand purpose of their roles get easily into the clutches of greed and try to turn back the current of progress.

This was originally broadcast in Telugu on the AIR on a Makara Sankranti in the Forties as part of a symposium. Later, Raghava himself translated his part of the symposium into English. This manuscript was in the possession of Raghava's son-in-law Sri D. Venugopalachari of Bellary.

The Purpose of Art

I believe I have to begin by thanking this august assembly in general and the Arts Association in particular, for giving me the pleasure of meeting you all and enjoying your hospitality. The function of presiding over an occasion like this is, or should be, gratifying to one's soul—if there was no cruel convention behind it that a president ought to make a speech at the beginning as well as at the end of the conference. Though I am an advocate by profession I tried to dodge this convention; for making faces and speeches to please a Non-English knowing client is something radically different from trying to make oneself heard in an assembly like this, especially, where the student element is ready to organize a concert of coughs at the least sign of a struggle on the part of the speaker. However, I always believe in the essentially sportsmanly instincts of a student. He is all love and mercy to the plea of guilty; and I am at once going to confess that I am no good at this sort of thing. So I wrote to your indefatigable secretary and tried to coax him to excuse my speech; but he was adamant and gave me to understand that under the draconian code governing such functions, I should and must make a speech of 40 minutes duration at least. He made out a very strong case on precedents and a demurrer on my part was summarily thrown out. So you must settle down to 40 minutes (unless I collapse in the middle) of infliction. If you sleep through it, I shall have no quarrel with you at all. On the other hand, if you shout me down, I would love you for I would be placed on the list of martyrs.

However the iceberg melted after all and the secretary assured me in his letter dated 24.10 1930 (I file it as an exhibit) that I need not worry myself about fine-arts in general, but I could confine myself to express my own ideas on stage, drama

and acting which will be most welcome, as he says it. I have a sigh of relief for I felt I was saved from my gross ignorance, committing the grave offence of exhibiting stolen goods (property), which I should have been surely guilty of if I had attempted to speak generally about fine-arts, their purpose or values. I would have been the proverbial fool walking on dangerous ground and the idiot who carried coals to New Castle (I do not know if you still get coal there). Yours is essentially a land of fine-arts. The formation of the country itself is a glorious work of Art. India itself is a country of fine-arts. The very soil is a piece of fine-art of nature. Your land, its soil and its people are particularly so. It would be presumptious indeed on the part of the likes of me to attempt to address you on arts. When I had the pleasure of meeting the great G. B. S. in London and told him that I had gone there to study the Western stage and art, he turned round and said "Why did you come here to learn art? It is we that should go to the East to learn art, religion and poetry".

But for me, living in the midlands, I must come here to my west to take lessons in art, religion and poetry. It was said of the great *Bhoja Raja* that even a look at his illustrious face would inspire the audience with poetic influence. May I be privileged to say that a *darshan* of your illustrious patron is enough to transmute the plainest prose into golden art and poetry.

Illusion of Diversity

This world is a place of festival of lamps, says Tagore, where, each race tries to keep a lamp of its own in full trim and splendour. There is diversity in the patterns; there is diversity in the colours; there is diversity in the shades and there is diversity in the brightness of the lamps. It is this diversity that makes universal life charming and glorious. The lamp of each race would possess an artistic splendour of its own and it is this diversity that is the strength of art; and the beauty of art is in revealing that behind this diversity there is unity. The aim of art as well as religion is to expose the illusion or *maya* of this

diversity that seems to reveal the unity that is the truth. If I may call it so, art is the unifying force of the world; a *sakti* which weakens and burns the germs of all harshness, pettiness, meanness, discord and war in this world, and from the very ashes calls into life sweetness, largeness, grandeur, music and love to bless this world. Art beautifies and strengthens creation. Art turns nature itself into a handmaid for serving man, bird and beast. Art helps us to expand and get nearer one another. That religious philosophy is imperfect which inclines towards isolation and contraction. Likewise I consider as imperfect, if not harmful, that art which does not lead self-expression into self-expansion and finally into the great love-fire of self-effacement and union with the great artist *Srikrishna.* Subjectively, as well as objectively, art is the expression of the mighty endeavour of all the suppressed emotions in human nature, disciplined, orderly and chastened by suffering. We are engaged in the work of throwing out the burdens of the soul in the hope of ultimately catching the sweet strains of *Srikrishna's* flute. Art is the stroke of chisel which knocks off the excrescence and makes the heart perfect to win love. Art is the brush which removes the dark spots on the heart and makes it pure for the worship of love. Art is the pen which fills the pages of the heart not with words but with love. Art is the contrivance which defies the heart's eye and enables it to see a dance accompanied by the celestial music of love.

I read somewhere that somebody took to painting to forget an unfortunate love-affair. That man was wise, if ever one was, and tried to fill his heart with love for matter. He failed and then turned to fill his heart with love itself. I am sure he would have become a great painter. You have all heard the story of Shiraz, how love helped the blind to see beauty and express it in a beautiful form. The heart's ache can be cured only by art. It is the churning of the suppressed emotions in one's heart that gives rise to glorious works of art. The churning, however, should be done in a disciplined manner with absolute thoroughness.

To get back to Tagore again, it is in the very scheme of universal life that the lamp of each race should have a pattern of its own. For instance if, in a great festival or carnival of lamps, all the lamps were fashioned into one universal mould the effect would be ugly and lacks the glory of life. It is hardly likely that there would be any race worth the name, that would not possess a lamp of its own. If any people however, due to any cause, allow their lamp to get dim or flicker in a feeble manner, their duty is quite clear. As soon as they realize their condition, they should try to attend to their lamp, trim and brighten it. To do this one should at the outset ascertain the peculiar make of one's lamp and learn the process of reviving and making it burn for ever and ever with an ever increasing glow and radiance. Here begins the difficulty.

Reality Behind Realism

Great masters have preached us in their writings, as well as in their speeches, about glorious ideals of our ancient Indian art; about the true aim of Indian art being to establish a communication channel between the creator and the creation; to suggest the reality behind realism and so on. But how to understand this ideal, make it our own? When it was known that art and philosophy and religion were correlated to one another it was easy to understand that the ideal of art was to join together; just as the knowledge of religion was to bring together. Then it was easy to grasp that the aims of a *yogin* and a true artist were one and the same. At the present day, however, when religion has degraded into religiosity, character-building has degraded into imitation of characteristics and art has sunk into artificiality, our glorious idea should stand as a far away glorious star and nothing more. A picturesque Chinese lamp cannot be trimmed by pouring kerosene oil on it; and an Indian lampstand supported on a brass cobra's hood cannot be fitted with a Bunsen's burner. That is the problem before us. How to understand that make or mechanism of our own lamp, in other words, how to understand and interpret the glory of our ancient ideal and bring it into line with the present day?

The lamp is there but buried under innumerable coal-dust layers of fear, convention and superstition. We have amongst us two distinct types of enthusiasts. One affects unlimited admiration, adoration and worship for everything that is past. To him the source of the river dared not be explored; the origin of a *sanyasin* dared not be questioned; to him a *brahmin* can do no wrong and to him even an honest endeavour to turn the cold white light of logic on any ancient institution, system, arrangement or belief, would be an act of sheer sacrilege and blasphemy. The other type would affect unmitigated contempt for everything ancient and Indian and would like to buy a new brand of lamp for the Indian race, ready made from the latest western markets. The one obstructs our progress and the other distorts it. One is blind and ignorant for he has not understood the real and superb strength of our really ancient ideals. The other is shallow and limits his conception of the universal life by a circle of collars, neckties and handkerchiefs. He discords the east and insults the west. It is necessary, therefore, to have a true and clear vision of our ancient ideals and then remember that it is our proud privilege and duty as well to make these ideals living and shining with all splendour and to fashion our progress and work in the light shed by such ideals.

To my mind, the characteristic genius of the ancient Indian culture has been to strive for the eternal, the truly permanent, to attempt to reach the centre of all life and to interpret their realizations to one and all. Fearlessness and love have been the mainsprings of all the ancient endeavours. All possible problems of life and after-life have been fearlessly tackled and tried to be solved. In evolution and progress the subconscious workings of a mind and the reactions on the subconscious mind are important factors to reckon with. A constant, vigorous and watchful look out to notice the subtle workings and movements of the subconscious mind in the building up of one's own character which is the laboratory of one's creative energy.

Give More than Received

The ancient Indian ideal in art as well as religion was to fearlessly face all possible problems of life individual and life universal in the course of obtaining correct concepts; to mercilessly probe into the very depths of the subconscious mind, to watch its subtle workings, take a firm hold of it and make its very tickings resound with the said concepts and then lovingly place before the world, within easy reach of every one, all such experiences. To give more than what was received was the ideal of life. To do so, one should be able to create, become a creator. Such creative energy is projected only from a perfectly disciplined subconscious mind. It is said, that poetry, music and the fine-arts are the media of expression for the subconscious mind. The finest music, the finest poetry and the finest art could therefore be expressed only by the supremely developed subconscious mind which alone is the true criterion of culture whether in an individual or a society. The subconscious mind, as long as it gave any room for thought which ran counter to the correct concepts formed, was held to be imperfect and undeveloped. Religion preached unity behind diversity and therefore it was necessary to fill the subconscious mind with all love and nothing but love towards man, beast, or bird to realize the great unity; and art helped the artist to express the workings of the subconscious mind, for the benefit of the world as well as himself.

The stage has another greatness about it. It is the place where the subconscious mind of the actor as well as of the spectator is developed and perfected. *Yadbhavam tadbhavati* is an oft quoted sanscrit saying and it is true. It is not only the actor that becomes what he feels but by the wonderful psychic force he creates in the sacrificial-fire of self-immolation the spectator also is made to feel and become what the actor feels and becomes. A true artist in his endeavour to establish the connection between the seen and the unseen passionately tries to interpret the natural as well as the super-natural and attains his object, seeks the only effective method of identifying himself with

nature in all her aspects, and places himself as the centre of all situations and all problems of life. He seeks to gain all experiences. He makes love to the ugly as well as to the beautiful. Sin and virtue are only ignorance and knowledge to him, *avidya* and *vidya*—failure, success, fame, censure, famine, plently, suffering, happiness, disappointment, deformity, perfection—a true artist seeks inspiration from all these human experiences in his own self—becomes a *mahanubhava* and then prays for the Divine Light which will reveal to him the great fountain of love from which all these currents run for the play of God's children. A true artist tries to love all and all conditions. For hate is fear and fear is ignorance—ignorance is sin which kills the true creative energy in man and transforms him into a sick vehicle in the train of human progress.

Rangasthala is Sacred Ground

A true artist—a true actor—uses the stage, eventually at least, to discover his own self and help others to discover their true selves. To him the *rangasthala* (stage) is sacred ground, where he should sit in *dhyana* (meditation), concentrate and try to contact his self. For ordinary *dhyana*, a secluded spot and silence are necessary. For the artist's *dhyana*, on the stage, the help of the entire body of the goddesses of fine-arts is essential, because the actor's *dhyana* is not confined to himself. It is the *dhyana* of a big joint family consisting of the actor as well as the audience. It is a congregational *dhyana*, and the congregation is composed of the high and the low, the lettered and the unlettered, the cultured and the uncultured, the ignorant as well as the knowing. The *dhyana* room or the theatre house should be clean, well-kept and helpful to concentration. In the surroundings paintings should be affixed to be the objects of *dhyana*; you are not helped to think of *Srikrishna* by concentrating upon a mutilated rhinoceros. It is cruel to ask the actor and the audience to imagine *Dwaraka* on a canvass which shows the Burma oil tank on the first line beach in Madras. To mix up a red painted cylindrical looking receptacle of the G. P. O. with the play

ground of a *Sakuntala* is certainly disturbing to one's peace of mind.

And the music should be real music indeed and not the mew of a sick cat. I am not one of those who think 'music has no place on a proper stage'. To the Indian artist-actor it is the expression of an idea, and the portrayal of a *bhava*, that are of paramount importance. There are certain ideas and certain *bhavas* which are best expressed only by music. The most powerful engine which enables the soul to reach the highest altitudes is music. The most effective sleeping draught to quiet the harrowing restlessness of one's mind is music. I mean good music. The most eloquent poet who can best describe beauty is music. The Kohinoor on the diadem of love is music. The alchemist's despair, which can turn dark egoism into gold is music. The elastic which stretches the individual soul into the infinite is music. I would not keep music away from the stage which is a place of worship and a centre of education. But you want a great musician to equip the stage with proper music. It is he that will know where to place music in the dramas on the stage. It is he that will know the exact *raga* which will correctly express the *rasa* required and be in tune with the time and occasion. Very few people know that there is close affinity between Indian music and the very working of the solar system. Morning, noon, evening, night each has its own particular and kindered *raga* which lovingly expresses or represents the spirit of the particular hour in which it is sung. Every second, every minute, every hour reveals a particular setting of the solar system which marks a particular rhythm. And any music sung at a particular time without reckoning the particular rhythm which is the soul of that time, is positively a discord to the true artist's ear. Still fewer people know that there is such a thing as time in drama. The ordinary actor never makes any attempt to study a drama in complete and ascertain the time of action for each scene.

The result of such ignorance is ludicrous. A king holds his court in the morning at 7 a.m. but you find the scene fitted up

with strings of electric bulbs to add to the grandeur thereof and the minister will narrate the impending invasion of a formidable enemy in a faultless *madhyamavati* song or verse and receive an encore. The ignorance of the actor is only outclassed by the ignorance of the audience. A little careful study would have brought home to the artist that lights were not required in the morning and that *madhyamavati* was untimely. Let us consider the situations where music would add to the real artistic splendour of the drama. Devotion, ecstasy, expression of love, even intense thought may afford a place for music; but you would certainly agree with me that a hunting field where you are hot and close on the tracks of a tiger, or a battle field when you are faced by an adversary, are not particularly suitable to let off *bhairavi* and *kambhoji*. I have often wondered if songs are sung on the hunting fields and battle fields of the stage for the purpose of annihilating one's enemies. The music certainly sounded killing and the discerning critic in the auditorium anyhow easily succumbed to its death-dealing charm. A true musician could easily avoid such errors. With a good house, with good surroundings and equipment, with good music, we require a good play, a good actor and a good press to complete the picture of a good stage and theatre, which would really be a sacred institution for the education of the subconscious mind of humanity.

All under Seventyfive are Young

Now a good play is the first requisite. The great poet Tagore said in one of his lectures that if the meal is ready there will be no difficulty in finding the servers and strikers (I mean the eaters). Likewise if a good play comes out, it will automatically attract a good set of actors. It is here the Herculean task of unearthing our ancient lamp begins. There should be a band of young men. All under seventyfive are young and thereafter middle aged. There is no old age in my dictionary. Indians are ever young who would assiduously set themselves to the task of clearing away all the cobwebs and barriers of fear-ejected conventions and superstitions which have so dimmed the lamp of our nation that today we stand unsaluted, unrecognized and are

bundled like slaves into an inglorious corner. We want a band of young poets and dramatists who would smash the weak and miserable spirit of unquestioning acceptance and adventurously drink deep of the spirit of fearlessness which enabled a *Visvamitra* to create new worlds; of the spirit of love which prompted *Yudhishthira* to claim equal rights for man and beast even at the heavenly portals of *swarga* and which, in recent times, prompted Tukaram to offer ghee to the dog which stole his only cake. We want a band of poets and dramatists who would not make heroes of persons who, possessing a hundred wives, would make love to a 101st and then prepare to kill their sons, to get permission from the 101st to perform an *ekadasi vrata*. We want a band of poets and dramatists, who would make their *Sakuntalas* administer wholesome kicks to the caddish *Dushyanta* and *Savitris* who start widow-homes. We want a band of young poets and dramatists who would sincerely work up to our ancient ideal of the stage and make it a centre of education, where problems concerning the relationship between man and man as well as man and his maker are studied and tried to be solved. It should portray or represent life as it is and also life as it should be. Concentration upon the unseen and unknown without proper discipline and sense of proportion is likely to loosen our hold of the seen and the known, and make our life's programme a meaningless and incoherent jumble of inconsistent items. An undue and lopsided emphasis upon spiritual life leads one to get crazy and fanatical to the great detriment of material life and miss the point, where the crossing from matter into spirit could be easily achieved. Owing to natural causes, environmental changes and egotistical arrogance, we have lost sight of the ancient ideal completely and begun to think of the creator apart from his creation, the maker apart from his great love, the father and not of his children. Consequently we have revelled in bringing gods and goddesses and their antics on the stage. We love to represent on the stage gods, goddesses, their loves and sorrows. Problems of ordinary life are not reckoned as fit subjects for the stage. This attitude of the mind should be changed quickly.

The future poet and dramatist of young India, should tune himself to receive inspiration to discuss the relationship between man and man, as well as the relationship between man and his maker. There are thousands of problems which present themselves for solution, in establishing the correct relationship between man and man. If the stage is to be reckoned as a place of education, which it is, then drama should not always obsess itself with portrayals of the unseen life, but also interest itself in the birth, growth and decay of the life manifested and seen. Our drama should, on the one hand, reveal to us our ancient culture, our racial genius and activity which tried to understand and solve the problems of life universal, and on the other hand it should vividly portray to us the potentialities of individual life, its aim and natural tendency to expand into the universal life, and the present conditions and conventions, which are rapidly stifling the very life and growth of our society.

Let the Great Masses wake up and Move

We must look around before we look up. We must look near and then far. Let us take a little more interest in *Srirama* as a ruler and king and find out how he solved the problems of monarchy. That should be the attitude. Let our dramas portray real life as it is at first so that the great masses may awaken and move. It is said that the perfect man's life would be the religion of the masses. The most interesting and useful study for a human being would be to watch the struggles, failures and persistence of man in achieving success and perfection. More than the exploits of a great man, the process of becoming great would be interesting, instructive and useful. To hold out to illustrate that the potentialities of greatness in every human being can become great and perfect, would be one of the best lessons taught to awakening minds. The chief purpose of education is, as has been recognized by great thinkers, to manifest the divine in man. This purpose can best be achieved by the help of arts and chiefly through the stage and the drama. The burning problems of current life and how they react on the human mind (advanced as well as undeveloped) and how the divine urge in

every human being strives to break through all obstacles to solve such problems, should be dramatized and represented on the stage. The lesson that great men are great because they can rise above mere environments should be taught from the stage. It is the problems of ordinary life that make all such environments; and our future dramatists should turn their attention to them.

Religion and Education

I cannot honestly subscribe to the opinion that instruction is not the purpose of art. The attainment of knowledge is the all pervading purpose of life and art is the expression of life. The stage is an emporium of all the fine-arts—the best centre of education. It is more useful than the school and more powerful than the church. For instance, the other day I read a lecture by somebody that our present day education is defective as our students have no chance of receiving any religious instruction any where. This is true. A correct religious basis alone is the foundation of character which is the source of all creative energy in a human being. Education without religion is a tank without water in it. The true essentials of any religion are universal love and brotherhood. If religious instruction is attempted in our schools you can imagine the difficulties. *Srivaishnava* parents would insist upon *Srivaishnava* instructors being appointed, the *Advaitins* would put up *Advaitin* instructors, the *Madhvas* would put up *Madhva* instructors and so on, driving our Directors of Public Instructions into a lunatic asylum. The stage can step in at this juncture and fearlessly undertake to place before us the ancient ideals of religion which made us great. Our dramas must discuss problems of our life and suggest ways and means for the betterment of our future society. Politicians, legislators, social reformers and even philosophers must utilize the stage in their work of educating the great masses.

Representation of life as it is, on the stage, need not mean the picturing of commonplaces. Incidents in life which show up mere characteristics of certain types do not lead us far. They

may at best disclose the manner in which a certain type of mind reacts to environment; whereas incidents in life which provoke the experimental and creative urges in man, which enable him to mould a character for himself above the environment that surrounds him are of a higher nature. Such incidents, whether in the lives of our heroes or in the present day life should be chosen by our young poets and dramatists. One of the chief functions of such a festival as this would be to find our budding poets and dramatists who may be loitering unrecognized and catch them up, encourage them, set proper ideals before them and provide them with all the sinews to produce plays which are useful to us.

Overflowing with Natya Simhas

Next we should pay a little more attention to the standard of histrionic art we possess now. If the basis of all knowledge and all art is inspiration then the basis of the histrionic art is pre-eminently so. An inspired actor is the only true actor.As Ashley Dukes put it, it is not the dress, nor the voice, nor the movement, nor the gesture, nor even the facial expression that makes the true actor. It is something beyond all this. It is the representation of the human mind at a particular stage of its development crying out for further light and further progress. It is the initial struggle of the "I" in trying to become "HE". It is the first and perhaps an ugly turn of the wheel of self-expansion and self-effacement. It is the soul's first attempt to free itself from the clinging folds of the encumbering ego. For plunging into the pure waters of universal love one should take a mighty pull from the flask of 'love' before one can get warm to the work in hand. "Fill your heart with love and you will learn acting" has always been my advice to all aspirants for fame on the stage. *Srikrishna* was, and will be, the greatest actor of all times for his heart is filled with love and nothing but love. However, the present day heroes and heroines are easily found. A strong voice and a love of tobacco are the only ingredients we look to in the making up of most of our actors. We are supremely satisfied if our heroes sing on the stage *jaya jaya*

gokula bala whether appearing as *Subrahmanyas* or *Karnas* or *Aurangazebs*—we do not care. To obtain an ordinary clerk's post in a government office or a teacher's post in a primary school, a school-leaving certificate, a good testimonial and the buffering of a god-father are all necessary; whereas the only test of eligibility for the stage is a powerful voice, passion for pan-supari and Player's cigarettes. The aim of most of our actors is to possess a string of medals and to procure the press to print their photographs. The enormous number of *natya-simhas* we have will overflow an African forest and the quantity of our '*ranga ratnas*' will fill the world's emporium of gems. The other day I read about a *jyotirmartanda.* It was how the lighting man of the stage was honoured and advertised. In Andhra Desa especially this craze for adjectives is a great malady.

Worse Sinners

I used to tell my student friends that strings of aimless adjectives were the real bonds that enslaved India and if Indian literature, Indian writers and speakers got rid of adjectives, swaraj would be within easy reach. I wonder how many of our actors study the drama as a whole and try to understand the place and purpose of each character and its relationship with the story. In this connection, I must say that the amateurs are worse sinners than the professionals for the responsibilities of the amateurs are greater. I am of the opinion that the life of the amateur association in South India is drawing to a close; because the ancient ideals of Indian art and the modern ideals of South Indian amateur art associations are not exactly one and the same. The ancient ideal of art was to try to interpret the reality behind realism in a way the man in the street may understand, to suggest the unity behind the diversity; whereas most of our associations work absolutely towards diversity and diversity alone. All of them—I mean the amateur associations—enumerate amongst their aims and aspirations a desire to improve the tone of the Indian stage for the development of the histrionic art and so on. The tone of the Indian stage and its development depend mainly upon the tone of the Indian drama. This is lost sight of.

connected with four important and influential amateur associations for the last 20 years and the course of life for these associations has almost always been the same. A good beginning—an inglorious ending!

It is true that the amateur associations make a mighty contribution to the development of the stage by smashing the absurd conventions and grotesque beliefs of the professional stage. The amateurs do establish a healthy and rich ideal—but they lack the organizing stamina to carry on their good work and develop eventually all the maladies of the professional stage. Money is a potent factor in all constructive work. The new dramas of the amateurs are badly written and do not attract good houses. Eventually chill penury suppresses all their enthusiasm. Some associations die out and others revert to the old dramas and old charms to keep life going. I am afraid this state of things would continue as long as we insist upon an unbearing and unrelenting code of work for love in the amateur associations. In my opinion it is for the amateurs to introduce new ideas and it is the professionals with their resources and discipline who should carry out and stabilize the work of the amateur associations. There should be a sort of comradeship established between the professional and the amateur and each should cooperate with the other in the sacred cause. There should be a system of mutual help. Also the amateur associations should seriously think of finding out talent outside its ring and helping such talent to live.

Responsibilities of the Press

Lastly the press has a serious responsibility in this matter. True art critics should interest themselves in this matter and help to educate public opinion. The stage and the auditorium act and react on each other. The actor should try to plan good works for the public and they should be helped to appreciate such works. Orelse the actor would lose enthusiasm. I firmly believe that first class goods would always find a market and a good drama of a true actor would eventually wrest

homage from even the least advanced amongst the audience, if only sincere and persistant efforts are made not to swerve from the ideals. Failure has a distorting effect upon ordinary human nature. The most ardent supporter of the new drama and the new ideal finds it hard to survive a continued famine in the region of the booking office. He could cling to his life if atleast he could find some one to pat him on the back and cheer him up. The disturbing element in the work of an art association is an auditorium of diminishing strength.

The more disastrous effect, however, is from an indifferent press. The press naturally, as individuals and other human institutions do, loves free tickets and a liberal disperse of such tickets would find a liberal place in the press columns. Thus the association of Artists, faced by the wolf at the door and losing all enthusiasm by the utterly promiscuous way in which the press mostly uses its adjectives and columns, either gives up the ghost or turns cynical and turns to engage itself either in bridge or newspaper reading. I appeal to the press to shoulder its responsibility fearlessly. The glory of India consists in the glory of its ancient ideals of art, religion and poetry. It is the press that can most successfully do the spade work of clearing our ancient ideals from the thick growth of shrubs and weeds. It is the press that can successfully open the eyes of the public to the decayed matter which is stifling our life and art and to the false gods we are worshipping. The evil demons of loveless conventions and fear-fraught superstitions should be laid low. Progress depends upon destructive work also. Obstalces to progress should be destroyed mercilessly. The press can render this valuable help to us.

Distorted and Pig-headed Attitudes

It may be pertinently asked how the unlettered can be helped to cultivate correct opinions and correct tastes. It is my opinion that the real obstacles in the path of our progress, politically, socially and in the field of art, spring from the distorted and pig-headed attitude of our so-called lettered classes who are half

made and half developed, and not from the masses who intutively appreciate a good reform if only they are not misled by the opinions of the mere noise-makers of the society. It is quite necessary therefore that the opinions and concepts of the imperfectly educated, lettered classes amongst us should be reformed and reconstructed. The masses will quickly move along the path of progress and we will soon have brightened and revived our ancient lamp of art and culture and taken a prominent place in the world's festival of fine-arts.

Raghava delivered this address on the 19th November, 1930 while presiding over the Fifth Arts Conference during the Travancore State Festival of Arts.

Girisam looks at Life

I express my thanks to the Vice-Chancellor and members of the Senate of the Andhra University for affording me this opportunity. I accepted this invitation with feelings of genuine pleasure. I consider this a class room.

I am an actor. I have played several roles till now. I have yet to play many more. The University has given me an opportunity to pause and consider the effects, the reactions I have felt in playing my parts; and the experiences I have gained if any. It is a genuine pleasure for an actor to stand still for a time and recall to his mind all his experiences and make a list of all the good and bad points of the theatre he plays in. More often the list of defects would be a longer one. Every actor has his own ideas of the defects of the stage on which he is asked to perform, his own complaints to make about the environment and accompaniments and his disappointment at the lack of culture in the audience to appreciate his talents. Most of the actors are satisfied with filling the pages in the complaint book and do nothing more. Some of them go a step further and offer suggestions about improvements to the theatre. The feelings of dissatisfaction at the state of affairs that exist may reveal the seed of ambition that would grow upwards and onwards. The striving after additions, subtractions and improvements in general may reveal the creative instinct which is necessary for progress all round.

Foot-lights are in My Blood

As an actor I have my own complaints and my own ideas about improving the stage and the theatre. What is true of the little stage is true of the bigger one as well. I like to think of the defects in and around me and propose to find ways and

means of curing such defects. To me it is a luxury to possess the facilities to think aloud; and I would not mind any audience to this performance for I am an actor essentially, and the footlights are in my very blood. More than this I have a curious fascination to be an actor and spectator as well. At times it becomes impossible for me to find the dividing line between the performer and the spectator. That which divides the acting on the stage from the perceiving in the auditorium looks to me to be artificial. In fact, I cannot get away from the idea of an invisible audience. In all my performances, at all times, such a feeling sits on my nerves. I prefer therefore to have a visible audience, whom I can easily conceive to be my own flesh and blood, nay, my own self in other forms. Their visible presence makes me feel fuller, more complete and stronger to the performance. If I fail, I fail only for the moment. I can at once jump up into the green-room once again where the eternal conductor stays ready with paint and brush to give me a new rig-out, and push me down to the stage to perform and perform and perform, till I myself have grasped the secret of colours which do not stick to me and the secret of dress which does not cling to me and feel that I can conduct myself. Then I would arrive at a stage when I feel like the green room, the conductor, the actor and the audience all rolled into one. Till that happy stage is reached, I must play many parts, pass through many experiences and indulge in thinking aloud for intellection and inspiration.

Resplendent Ratnahara

What I speak today should be taken only as loud thinking on my part. Oftentimes I have dreamed about Girisam, the adorable offspring of the late Gurajada Appa Rao who, with his *kanyasulkam,* has thrown a resplendent *ratnahara* over the shoulders of the Andhra Dramatic muse. This ornament still shines unmatched. What a darling child is Girisam! To me Girisam is not an ease-loving, cigar-smoking, muffler-wearing cane-swinging, curly-headed, gallivanting, crooked-mined adventurer. He represents to me the irresponsible youthful Andhra spirit which dives deep and drags to the surface the grotesque

and pathetic looking crabs and tadpoles of our society and plays with them. His eleven causes of the degeneration of India are no fanciful bluster to me. I really think that Girisam's eleven causes of the degeneration of India are painfully true. Like the master artist he is, he does not spoil the picture by enumerating them seriatim. He wants us to think about them seriously. Perhaps his own life and exploits disclose to us what the eleven causes are. I have oftentimes wondered about the eleven causes and now I propose to think aloud about them.

Most of you love Girisam—if for nothing else, at least for his fascinating weaknesses. Bear with me for his sake. Girisam says he delivered his lecture in the Poona Deccan College. At once our memory is tingled with the sacred memories of the Great Bala Gangadhar Tilak. The eleven causes should be real and telling indeed for he says that all the professors assembled there became speechless. That one and all the professors should have been affected in such a remarkable manner indicates that the eleven causes should have a direct bearing on the ordinary, everyday life of society and the individual as well. I begin at once to think of such a life.

As a Duck takes to Water

I am reminded of the lantern-lectures (he would always try to impress upon me by the aid of a lantern) of a collegemate of mine. He was a mighty champion of the West, the western life and culture. He would urge that might and right would ordinarily go together. He would point out to me that it was a habit with Indians (most of them) to regard western life focussing its attention more upon matter, material possessions ; and that such a view was erroneous and warped. He would charge the Indians with an unhealthy appetite for mere words and words alone. He would go further and preach to me that religion as practised in India was kept away from practical life and the welfare of society. I had a fascination for the theatre even in those days and did appear on the boards and sometimes win recognition as well. My friend would point out that as I was born in a brahmin

family and to brahmin parents it was no wonder I could act. He would lay down that to a brahmin acting was like water to a duck. I would then insist upon an explanation as to why the histrionic art was so natural to a brahmin. He would point out that the brahmin boys were, from a very early age, encouraged to pretend—for instance to pretend to perform their *sandhyavandanam.* Eventually he would floor me down, with an invincible argument holding forth that the very fact we were a subject nation stamped the Indian with a servile mentality and consequently with spiritual poverty. He would say that pseudo-religiousness is weakening young India and dragging the elderly Indian into a mire of impotent, actionless resignation.

The Will to do

I did not like to agree with my friend's extreme views, but I have always tried to test the truth of such views. I agreed with him that the fun of life, nay the very purpose of life, consists in action. Action denotes strength and strength carries with it the passport for travel onwards to realize the beautiful, which in its perfection is the Kingdom of Heaven. Is it a fact that our life is devoted more to an indulgence in mere words and listening to lectures? Is there a big gap between the realm of thought, and the realm of action or habit? If so, what is the reason? As a great master has put it, character is nothing but conviction automatized; and culture looms bigger as the distance between the realm of thought and the realm of habit grows lesser. It is not so much as knowing what to do, but possessing the will to do it that is the hall-mark of a man and his manhood. The necessity of all books, all learning and all panditism is merely to construct a stone-house of convictions and connect it with the power-house of action. It is a fact that we have lost sight of the gap between our realm of thought and our realm of action? If so, is there anything wrong with our conception and standard of culture? If our cultural attainment is not full is our outlook of life full and undistorted?

I am reminded of another great man's saying that life is checking of the waste in the centre. I may be permitted to

consider life as consisting of responses to stimuli internal or external. Then it may be said that the higher the culture is, the greater the control would be over such responses. An involuntary response would be waste of energy. A well controlled and well regulated response would denote a correct evaluation and fuller use or enjoyment of life. To have a grip over the levers that control human energy is to keep the vital forces of life in full battle array for progress. To slacken the grip would, in all probability, disorganize the proper functioning of the levers thus allowing energy to escape and be spent without any need. In the prime cause, the unit or germ of growth and development in life, lurks the germ of decay, on the watch to pounce on the levers that control, and steadily rust and eventually dismantle them. It is strict discipline alone that can keep the mind's forces mobilized and prevent the germ of decay from attacking the levers that control the energy. We should always keep ourselves in fighting order to overcome the thousand and one bandits who surround us to destroy our vital forces and principles.

Waste-habit

It would therefore look that the waste-habit has got a tendency to break up the vital forces of life and as a result man may sink from his natural or original glory—in other words he may degenerate.

The person who, without a second thought, responds to all the devitalizing and disintegrating influences in life, weakens himself absolutely and becomes a sick vehicle and will not only injure himself but also act as a drag upon the progress of human society. I am reminded of the sayings of a great social worker living on the banks of the Tungabhadra in my district. He would divide the functioning units into three groups. The first is the Badkar group. The group which would easily respond to all undesirable influences and waste its energy in no time. The second group he would call the parhezar group. Parhez in Urdu means diet. The expression would therefore mean a dietarian, one who keeps away from unhealthy food or unwholesome food

under the instructions of a doctor, but with a strong taste or craving for such food. The desire to respond is not voluntarily under this person's control; but is temporarily held under check owing to an external threat. The third group he called the khuddar group, which possesses complete mastery over the responding impulses and avoids all wasteful play.

At once I tried to look upon waste or the habit of waste as being relevant and material to the investigation of Girisam's eleven causes.

I take up his history once again—I would like to call it history and not a story.

Education for the Good of Society

In the very first scene, Girisam refers to the eleven causes of degeneration in impressing upon his dear *chela* Venkatesam, the basic principles of true education, which he so definitely suggests should be based not so much upon books and examinations as upon direct contact and association with the guru. He cleverly leads us to think over the expression *upadesa* which is the keynote of the ancient Aryan system of education. What a vista of beautiful pictures and thoughts is at once opened up before us! Education is sitting near your teacher who, like a loving magnent, will draw out the best in you and make you bigger and comelier and the end of education would be to gain access to the proximity of the greatest teacher of all and become absolutely perfect. Again Girisam bursts out with righteous indignation at the lop-sidedness of our system of education which gives a wicked importance to a pass and fail to reckon the chastening influence of a failure in life. He asks Venkatesam pertinently whether his teacher had the command of the language which the pupil had. In other words, he questions whether the teacher could expresss himself as well as Venkatesam, the student. Now this takes us to a careful consideration of the art of expression which is a very important factor in the scheme of education. It is the power of expression that denotes the

standard of education, learning by itself would not be discharging all its obligations, if it cannot express itself clearly and correctly for the good of society. Correct expression is based upon a good command of the language and a precise use of the words. Education which does not lovingly help the student to think out for himself and bring out the best gift and talent in himself and which does not equip him with the appropriate form of expression to serve the needs of society, could be pardonably called a waste of time.

Eluding Creditors

Again in the same first scene our dear friend Girisam reveals his remarkable talent for making other people pay for his pleasures and expenses. The other day I was reading about the publication of a book which professes to teach the honourable and ever growing band of impecunious gentlemen in this country, the excellant art of avoiding one's creditors. He says *yetu chuchina andariki bakile.* He reminds us of the cannons and the picture is complete. Demands to the right of him, demands to the left of him, demands in front of him and demands behind him. Girisam eludes them all like the mysterious Houdini. In Girisam's case, an ignorant world could not appreciate his talents, nay his genius, and he was consequently obliged to put other people's money into his purse and laugh at the Bill Collectors. He could afford to snap his fingers at debts generally; and he dramatically illustrates to us the advantages of a brahmin debtor who, with the help of his sacred thread, can always exorcise the spirit of a dunning agent. All debtors are not blessed with the resources and nonchalance of a Girisam. There is also the case of some non-brahmins, who do not possess the advantage of a sacred thread. There are some brahmins as well who have discarded the sacred-thread as a mark of their liberty, independence and high culture. It looks therefore that all things considered, debts are to be avoided by the average man. A debt might be the result of either an absence of income or the waste of income. I think that Girisam was thinking of the latter cause; for to him, earning of income could not have

presented many difficulties. So waste of money as a potent cause of indebtedness should have been prominent in Girisam's thoughts. We see thus two of the eleven causes of the degeneration of India according to Girisam indicated in the very opening chapter of the play. Is he right? That is the question. Waste of time and waste of money.

Castles in the Air to Mortgage

To the Western mind both may be one and the same, for time is money to the Western. It is not so with us. Any busy lawyer or medical practioner will easily bear me out. This point need not be elaborated. I should therefore like to consider the two causes separately. I shall first consider the cause 'waste of money' as a factor leading to the degeneration of India.

I do not know how business is done in other worlds; but on our planet money is a very important factor in transacting business–and for peace of mind in life. Generally it might have been so when the growing and flowing beards of the sages swept the land (and would have filled with tears the eyes of barbers if any existed at that time). In olden days it might have been possible to look askance at money. Even now it might be possible for some who pretend to look heavenwards eternally to pretend to look down upon money and call it the base seducer. However for us, who can be counted by hundreds, thousands, nay millions; for those who are always running wild in search of appointments, for those who are always obliged to work like machines; for those who perpetually strive to make both ends meet when the said ends are poles asunder; for those to whom the acceptor of a promissory note is a God in disguise; and for those whose greatest wish is for the invention of some interest-killing balm (nothing in this world grows as quickly as interest—prickly pear is miles behind it) money is the ever eluding great beloved. It is rarely indeed we have enough funds. We need them for all purposes—money for births, we need money for deaths, for birthday celebrations and death observances. We need money for marriages, even for mere thread-

marriages, as they are called. Then there are the tonsure ceremonies for which all the relations should travel to god-occupying hill-stations and propitiate not only the said gods but the entire secretariat establishment including the chaprasies for the luxury of an inartistic shave. The barber in the plains demands only 12 pices, whereas the hill-station artist demands sixteen annas and is still dissatisfied. Then comes the marriages, consummation ceremonies, for which due publicity should be given by beat of drums and the play of the brass-band taking no account of feelings of decency of the happy pair. Then there are the several little ceremonies to be performed before and after delivery. There are the innumerable festivals, chiefly those commencing sometime in September and closing in December, for which, as one of my friends would put it, the quantity of ghee required would oblige the *grihasta* either to sell or mortgage his land. Last, if not least, there is the item of school and college education to boys and girls. This item of education involves not only waste of money but also waste of time, waste of energy, waste of intellect and waste of talent and waste of breath as well. I shall think about the said causes under the item of education. We want money for all things enumerated above and for many more things left out by me. We want plenty of money too to keep up the false conventions and false notions of prestige. To spend money on non-essentials and unnecessarily is foolish even for those who could afford it, whereas it is an unmitigated crime for those who cannot afford it. I think that no one in India, at any rate no Hindu in India (including the Maharajas and Rajas) is rich — for the simple reason that the nation as a whole has to pay out yearly more than what it gets in. It is certainly getting poorer every day and when the Indians as a nation are poor, it is pure fallacy to say that some individuals in the land are rich. The prosperity of an individual is the prosperity of the nation and vice versa. This is pure logic. That we are spending money unnecessarily is true. Consequently we should not pay out more than what we get in. Our income is limited and whittled down by various causes; and our expenditure is based on an outlook of life which is fanciful. We will

not cut down the cost of our marriages and other ceremonies purely owing to the tyranny of convention and traditions which are miles away from all notions of sweet reasonableness. The other day, an insolvent, during examination by court, attributed his plight to the marriages of seven of his daughters. He said he had five more to perform for which he had only his 'castles in the air' to mortgage. For a moment, consider the waste we indulge in the mere issuing of marriage-invitation cards by hundreds and thousands. To please some old relations; to keep up appearances in the eyes of the castemen and friends and to follow in the wake of traditions which are as relentless as unmeaning, we borrow and do celebrate marriages. I think the habit of borrowing by itself plants the first germ of decay in one's self-respect.

Wasting other People's Money

Can it be said that we are extravagant in spending money on dress or personal comforts? Travelling for pure pleasure is not generally a costly factor with us. Our dwelling abodes very often indicate that money has not been lavishly spent on our comforts. In fact plain living in ordinary life is in our very blood. Our heritage, our environmet and our climate—all help us to be simple in our food, simple in our dress and simple in our desires. If simplicity is beauty in life, the Indian possesses a decided advantage to realize and achieve beauty in his every day life. It is doubly regrettable therefore that we should have taken to extravagant habits and running into debt. Social conventions and a deplorably cribbed mentality are inexorably driving us to the verge of ruin. A grim and steady fight should be started to cut down our expenses all round. It is a pathetic truth that we do not hesitate of marrying when we are starving. Our present day social conventions which stand in the way of our economic progress must go. Waste not money, should be our *mantra.* We should now try to make a rupee go further than a rupee. Of course, this requires gumption. Grin and save your first pie and the subsequent process becomes easy. Andrew Carnegie is credited with the statement, save your first hundred dollars and

it is easier to save your next thousand dollars. One who begins by wasting one's own money always ends by wasting other people's money and becomes a menace to society. I think of the gratuitous advice given to us mostly by foreigners that we Indians are not sufficiently civilized and that we should raise our standard of living. This may or may not be true; but it can never countenance the waste of money we indulge in, led by conventions and superstitions, which are the off-spring of misconceived *achara* and *sampradaya.*

Thirtythree Crore Gods to help

Second, let me ponder over the waste of time the average middle class Indian is guilty of. With this some other kinds of waste are closely associated. I like to think of all of them together. Waste of time, waste of energy, waste of power of intellection and waste of talent.

I do not possess precise information of how the so called rich class spends its time in India, if there is any rich class in the correct sense of the term. Many of the rich spend their time in getting rid of their riches and a few persist in growing richer. I suppose it is the same all over the world. I shall leave them alone. Nor shall I think of the gentlemen at large who are strenuously employed in finding witnesses for courts, old grooms for young wives, votes for elections and singers for gramophone records, actors for talkies and writing newspaper advertisements. They are beyond my grasp. The case of the agriculturist is easy enough to understand. It is in very rare cases he finds work enough for all the year round. He practically wastes all his time not spent in his agricultural work. Take the case of the working classes. I think they include the quill drivers, the bazar load-carriers; as well as the government load-carriers; the moulders of clay as well as the moulders of young pretties (I mean the teachers); the hair-dressing profession as well as the hair-splitting profession (I mean law) and so on and so forth. The ordinary working man requires all his time to keep the wolf from the door; and the others require all the skill to keep the bill-collector from the

door. Can we say that hundreds and thousands of such people we have amongst us understand the glory of life? Without such realization can we say that our time is well spent? We should live like men and not like creatures to be trodden upon. And we should live like free men. The desire for freedom should, I think, be an overflow of the expanding strength of the inward spirit. That which makes life triumphant is the time we can devote to watch over the proper functioning of the inward processes, inward work and inward machinery. The fact however is that it is the life of the working class; the middle class is fully engrossed in attending to outwardness.

The best portion of our life is spent in attending schools and colleges when we are asked to seek, not materials for the inward growth, but materials mainly, if not entirely, for the sake of earning rupees, annas and pies. We spend thousands to earn a pittance which is not enough to pay the interest on the investments made by our parents. Immediately after, our time is spent in job hunting, our expenditure being hammered all the way by wives and children, for we must marry at any cost. The inevitable result is that by the time the average middle class Indian finds a job and settles down to enjoy the fruits of life, he finds he has only tinned fruits round him which he has to buy at enormous prices, perchance to run the risk of ptomaine poisoning. He finds life to be a sack and humble race for the day and a disturbed sleep for the night. All to win the prize of half-a-loaf of bread when a whole loaf is insufficient to meet his demands. A brain crammed with odds and ends not very useful for his work-a-day life; a mind dwarfed and an out look of life warped by domestic influences, a body weakened by early marriage and possessed with an unhealthy desire to get on somehow, we start our lives, racing for work cheerlessly, returning home cheerlessly, running into debts recklessly, breeding children fearlessly; calling upon all the thirtythree crores of gods to help us; and approaching the end with fear of *acharas* and hell. Some will get blunted and take things as they are. Some will worry and feel that all is not well. Some will feel that they

ought to do something. There is no time however to do anything outside the routine work, much less time to think and consequently, most of us will take to a sort of 'do-nothing but break-coconut religion' and try to find solace in it. When as a fact we are weak and cowardly, we imagine we are pious and heaven-bound. We readily find a Sanskrit sloka to convince ourselves that suffering is the badge of the virtuous and the sesame of the heavenly portals. We cry "thy will be done" not with a joyous exclamation but with a writhing resignation and with a piety projected by fear. The springs of energy are not freshened and brightened by dreams of daring ambition; rank weeds of unhealthy fatalism readily coil round the faint heart; we fall back for support on texts, misinterpret the potent peace of *satva* into impotent inaction of *tamas*, keep within doors and chant ourselves to death with prayers for mercy. Such a philosophy is to reckon pain and suffering as punishment which can never help one to realize the glory of life. Thus there is a waste of our time and a waste of our energy.

Intellectual Vision blurred

Surely there is an enormous waste of our powers of intellection as well. I do think of the real handicap that hampers the freedom of movement in this direction. It is true, our field of action is limited by causes which are unavoidable at present. The gymnasium for exercise is limited. However are we giving enough exercise, such as we can within the limited space, to our powers of intellection? Whether it is our defective training or our unnatural environment or the misconception of our true religious ideals, whatever the cause may be, the fact is fairly clear that we are sternly kept away from the realm of doubt.

We are strictly enjoined not to question, much less to doubt certain things, fear of Sanskrit slokas on the one hand and fear of proving the wrath of relentless social tyranny on the other hand set unbreakable and unremovable blinkers on our intellectual vision and we are obliged to run only in one rut. The blinkers grow more and more obstructive as age advances; for

the fear of *Yama*, his clerk and his registers looms bigger and bigger.

Nervousness to consider the present and future in a fearless manner, a dread to cast aside the blinkers set by religious exploiters, a desire to shut ones eyes to naked realities; a growing fear of a clinch with the hard and ugly facts of our present day existence; a complacent belief that unthinking obedience to some old saying is saintliness, all these prove that something is rotten in one's kingdom of intellect. Even our powers of observation are consequently ill-developed.

Wasting our money, wasting our time, dissipating our bodily energy by wasting our powers of intellection and observation—can it be said that we are really enjoying life ?

Poking Noses

When he says "*think annadaya inglishwadu*," I think Girisam is right. We are not encouraged to think from the beginning. As children our instincts of curiosity are severely snubbed and as students our opportunities for observation are severely cut. Our spiritual preceptors are deadly against our liberty of thought. The result is apparent. Our brain power is wasted. Conclusions are arrived at hastily and opinions are expressed without any ascertainment of facts. I should like to think of two dire evils which arise from this waste of our thinking faculties and the consequent anaemia of brain-power it brings on. One makes us uncharitable and the other makes us unmanly. Let me try to explain myself. There is a tendency in the uneducated man to find a peculiar occupation for his nose—to poke into other people's affairs and to imagine odours at the faintest atmosphere. It is regrettable but it is a fact that the uneducated mind jumps to pick holes in others and strain its ears to believe ill of others. A little thought, a little reckoning, a little consideration of the pros and cons, a little judicious feeling, would certainly clean the atmosphere of a society from the petrifying influences of scandal. Gossiping, which unfortunately

is seeking to enter the portals of schools and colleges and tends to ruin the young mind, is unsportsmanly and uncharitable. I need not waste your time, by elaborating over the far-reaching evil consequences (to the society as well as to the individuals) which result from a habit of indulging in thoughtless talk and careless opinions.

The other evil I referred to is graver still. I referred to a tendency in the uneducated man to find a peculiar occupation for his nose. I shall now refer to a tendency in the so-called educated man, which is also connected with the same organ, the nose. It is the occupation of boring holes in it to pass a strip through, for being lead by others. To submit to be lead by others is to make life a made-easy series. An unused sound box cannot produce full and far-reaching notes and similarly an unused thinking box cannot have fearless and far reaching ideas. In the one case the music lacks melody and continuity. In the other case, the ideas lack daring and perservance. The sound in one shakes with weakness; and the projections of the other quake with fear. They quake with fear to enter the field of daring enterprise and adventure, which enabled a *Visvamitra* of old, our own *Visvamitra*, to create new worlds for us (our municipalities do not allow us to create new latrines at least). Look at that picture and the present picture. Our ancestors revelled in free and fearless thinking. Even the very gods were defied. The gods of those days rose to the occasion, were very noble and encouraged a fighting man. The then God said: my son, fight on, fight me and I shall embrace you more quickly, than I would one who stands at the door, breaks coconuts and spanks his own cheeks. God loves a chap who knows not, when he is beaten. That is the ancient Aryan picture. Look at the present picture. Our gods have taken to a life of ease. Their occupation appears to be perpetually listening to their time-worn exploits and preening themselves about and occasionally rewarding their devotees by sending them droughts, famines, epidemics and such like favours. Our spiritual ordinances are such that we are not

even allowed to think fearlessly. What wonder is there that our powers of intellection are wasted most pathetically.

Self is dead – Long Live the Self

The next kind of waste that Girisam must have thought about is of wasting of talents.

There is one talent, faculty or gift that is common to all human beings; and that is the greatest talent which is implanted in us by supreme force, out of its infinite mercy. It is the latent talent of self-forgetfulness or self-effacement. The greatest triumph of all knowledge is self-discovery or self-realization. I think self-effacement and self-realization are so closely connected together that one leads to the other. This latent talent should be grown and developed to its fullest extent. That is the key note of our ancient Aryan culture. That is the key note of our *sanatana dharma.* I mean the real stuff — not the camouflage which recently failed to get an entry into the Legislative Assembly at Delhi. Charles Landford in his book 'India: The Land of Regrets' refers to Mahatma Gandhi as follows; "He is so difficult to deal with because he is so deeply, so sincerely self-effacing. He seeks nothing for himself. He really does love his enemies. He is so ready to die for his faith and his people." This talent of self-effacement helps us to cry out hastily, "The self is dead. Long live the self." The lower and touch-me-not self is dead; and long lives the higher and all-embracing self. Real life shines only after the lower and touch-me-not self is burnt up. The spark which kindles the fire to burn up the doer is also within us. The greatest of Indian poetic conceptions is the personification of this divine spark in us as *Narada* who always forces the lower self to enter into a contact with the greater self and burn itself up. This burning up process is created by external as well as internal stimuli. *Narada* represents the concentrated essence of the internal stimuli which, like Frankensteins, attach themselves to their parent and, by constant friction, generate the fire which burns up the lower self. This faculty of self-effacement is within us; the spark is within us; *Narada*

is with us, but *Narada* is a great artist and the easiest way to get at him is through the development of artistic sense or faculty. Drama is, without challenge, the king of fine-arts. It is instinctive in its inception. It is essentially human and universal. The dramatic instinct when properly developed helps one to discover the secret of real joy and enjoyment. Real joy has no reaction of fatigue or regret in it. That is the *ananda* which sublimates both the body and the mind. Such real pleasure comes only when one rises above the ordinary functioning of the mind, which limits our vision, perception and conception. The conception of the limitless and the infinite is impossible for a mind which functions always within a limited space. The dramatic instinct is implanted in each and every one of us to gently slip out of the mind's confines—out into the limitless zone of infinite beauty and bliss. The dramatic instinct aims at developing one's ability to remove one's own paint and dress of *prarabdha*—to destroy one's *vasanas.* It is the dramatic instinct which enables one to glimpse the ray of real enjoyment by leading one through the rain and sunshine of enjoyment which is unreal. It is the actor, who, if sincere, can easily realize the talent of enjoying the unreal that is in him. An actor will be sorrowful but not sorry. He will experience the sensation of pain, sorrow and yet enjoy them. Subjectively he is full of joy for the discovery of a wonderful gift in him, which opens the gates of a new world for him, just as a child feels when suddenly the power of articulation is within its reach. Objectively an actor feels he can, if he is sincere, take the audience along with him through all his feelings of sorrowing, pain, sympathy, heroism and so forth. True and correct expression is necessary for the service of society as I said before. True and correct expression is not easy until one dwells in the part he chooses to play and yet holds oneself detached from the dwelling. This great dramatic instinct in human nature finally leads one on to the glorious heights when true life shines resplendent. It is very necessary that this instinct should be allowed to grow freely and fearlessly. The instinct should be exercised properly. The child should be asked to don and doff

coats constantly so that the art of removing the congenital coat and congenital grease-paint may be quickly learned.

Art beautifies Creation

Side by side with this histrionic instinct, there is the instinct of song, the faculty of music, implanted in us. We should develop this faculty and not waste it. The most powerful engine which enables the soul to reach the highest altitude is music. The most effective soothing draught to quieten the horrowing restlessness of one's mind is music. The most eloqüent poet who can describe beauty is music. The Kohinoor on the diadem of love is music. The philosophic stone which can transmute any hard egoism into flexible gold of self-effacement is music. The lure which can draw the individual soul into the infinite is music. This instinct of music should be found and encouraged.

Girisam should have deplored the Indian's indifference to the development of his artistic sense and artistic temperment. The dreadful waste of such faculties should have shocked him. It is art that beautifies and strengthens creation. It is art that discovers in nature the wonderful mother who blesses all. It is art that destroys the artificial barriers between man and man. It is art that leads self-expression into self-expansion and finally into self-effacement. It is art that trains our ears to catch the strains of *Krishna's murali.* Art is the stroke of chisel that knocks off the execrescenes in our composition and makes us perfect to deserve the love of *Krishna.* It is art which helps us to cast off our load of garments and appendages and blitholes to fall in step with the mighty *Sankara* in his glorious dance of death - full of life. What a calamity, Girisam should have thought, that one should neglect the development of fine-arts (which reveal to us the glory and strength of life) and waste the faculty of fine-arts implanted in us. Can we consciously say that our centres of education whether it be our houses, schools or colleges, afford us the necessary opportunities to foster and develop the latent faculties for arts in our young men. There is marked inclination on the other hand, to discountenance such

instincts and waste the talents. This kind of waste is one of the potent causes of the degeneration of India and her culture.

Along with the waste of our thinking or reasoning faculties, Girisam must have thought of the habit of one's waste of emotion as a probable fifth cuase of the degeneration of our society. The Andhras are said to be very emotional. As a matter of fact, I am afraid, all Indians are emotional; also commotional and unnecessarily so. To be emotional without any real progressive motion or moment is not a great virtue. I am reminded of Mr. S. V. Ramamurti's presidential speech on the occasion of the fourth Andhra Nataka Kala Parishat held in Madras during last December. He said that Andhras were very enthusiastic in starting works; but it was the Tamil genius that kept up the works going. This is a matter for consideration. Mr. Ramamurti's observation upsets a text which often been quoted by my father *arambhasuraha khalu dakshinatyaha*. However Mr. Ramamurti's opinion cannot but be a carefully considered one. If he is true, (I am inclined to agree with him) our emotions which effervesce without any practical results are sheer waste. Girisam must have noticed this habit of waste with great regret.

For Favours in Higher Worlds

To be emotional is to raise oneself into a higher and nobler zone of life where currents of sympathy, charity and self-sacrifice have full play. Such feelings however should get beyond ideas of self-complacency and self-exaltation. They should not be prompted by fear of society or a craving for individual glorification. The objective should be the greatest good to society. Take the case of charity. The Indian's boast that he is very charitable, his doors are always open to the street beggars; and he is even ready to help the needy and the suffering; but there is no system or organization about it all. People who are really needier, the cruelly oppressed and the acutely suffering humanity, do not easily find a place in an Indian's scheme of charity. The dominant motive is not so much as giving relief to the deaf, dumb, blind, maimed and destitute as to win favour in some

higher worlds for the individual himself. The duty towards society is given only a corner seat. The consequence is that there is more of waste than benefit out of such charity. If a common stone-house should be established in each village or town and if the daily alms each man and woman gives in money or kind should be collected in the said stone-house and if there should be an organized body to distribute such common collections amongst the really needy in village and town, Indian charity would be more useful than wasteful.

Do Nothing and Multiply

Take the case of the joint family system. There was need for the system in the olden days. It is a matter for careful consideration whether the system is necessary in the present days. Is the system adding to our man-power or detracting from it? Is it not a common sight that one man is obliged to earn and feed a number of drones who do nothing but marry and multiply? Is it not a fact that in a joint family the moment the earning member passes away his widow is thrown entirely on the tender mercies of ill-educated, uncultured, pleasure-seeking and selfish junior members who live mostly by the law of survivership? Is it not a fact that most of us are suffering under this system, swayed by false feelings of sympathy and charity? Our feelings of sympathy and charity, unless they can be turned into good account for the good of society, are sheer waste of our emotional springs and tend certainly to degenerate our strength.

I was reading the other day about fine places during the winter cold in the Punjab. They have chimneys and the way they are constructed allows the heat to escape through the chimney. Instead of distributing heat to the needy people around, the construction takes most of the heat away to the skies through the chimney. Are our ideas of charity, fellow-feeling and sympathy, similarly found? Is it a waste? Girisam perhaps thought it was. Next I am led to think of Girisam's views on man's emotions, his feelings of charity, self-sacrifice, self-respect and so forth. They were very sound indeed. Girisam never wasted his emotions.

He had no sickly sentiment about such feelings. When Venkamma accidentally fell into a well, he was there to risk his life and rescue her; but he never cared for Venkamma's feelings, when he proposed to elope to Gretna Green with the beautiful Buchamma; for the elopement had a double object in it, the object of re-stringing the lyre of Buchamma's life and that of averting the danger of disastrous marriage to Subbamma. I think of Girisam's relations, first with *Putakoolamma,* second with Madhuravani and the third with Buchamma. All three were good-looking. I think the way *Putakoolamma* is personated on the stage is not to my liking. All were attractive and beautiful. Girisam however knew how to control emotions and use them to the best advantage of society. *Putakoolamma's* profession was to give food for money. Girisam got food without money. There it ended. Madhuravani's incident is apparent enough. Now consider his emotions as regards Buchamma. They were used to undestand a fellow-being and to advance the cause of social-reform. Emotions which effervesce without any practical results are sheer waste of human energy.

More Voice than Necessary

Certainly Girisam should have waxed eloquent over the waste of youth, waste of flesh and blood, waste of breath and the non-development and (consequently) waste of will power as some of the other causes of the degeneration of India. We have no well-known institution or organisation for the education of our voices. Even our music schools as well as our education classes do not appear to attach sufficient importance to voice-training. The ancient Aryan culture paid particular attention to the art of regulating one's breath.'The chanting of Vedic hymns, I consider, as a wonderful lesson in the art of voice education. I think of the present day South Indian stage and the huge waste of breath on it. It is only very few actors that can control their breath, avoid waste and use it to the best advantage. Anger, grief and love are all pitched in the same key. All sentiments are more or less shouted out. I am alive to the handicaps in the ways of the actors. I am alive to the unscientific construction

of our theatres. I am alive to the counter-noices caused in the auditorium by soda-openers and picnic-makers. Nevertheless I am inclined to think that more voice than necessary is spent on the stage. This waste is more apparent in court-halls. If shouting is considered to be an important factor in the histrionic art it is (by many) considered to be an all important factor in the demonstration of one's forensic capability. This art of shouting appears to be infecting the bench as well. If I think of our meetings (especially of the Kala Parishat) and the way we shout at one another, the way we shout all together, at the Chairman and the way the Chairman, the proposer, the seconder and the rest—all join in shouting at the press-reporters present. There is tremendous waste of voice. The art of modulating one's voice and regulating one's breath, adds to the cultural strength of a human being and the waste thereof is decidedly a sign of degeneration.

Paucity of Maidens

Next Girisam goes into raptures over the beauties of country life, dwells lovingly over the luxuries of best tobacco, best curd and best ghee. At the same time he regrets that our country does not possess 'maidens' which according to him is a colossal *kalankam*. The paucity of maidens in India strikes him as a real defect and perhaps as a potent cause for the degeneration of our society. When I read it, I pondered over the question and it struck me that there was something peculiar about the several stages of life amongst Indians. Are there many real youths in India? Dictionaries describe youth as the period between childhood and manhood. I believe, in practical life, we can easily conceive what manhood is. I would like to think of youth as that period, when a human being is afforded opportunities to imbibe all that is best for his further progress and evolution, without a care or thought. It is a period when a human being is supposed to enjoy the best of health, the best of spirits, without any worry, without any encumbrances or drags, no sense of fatigue and looks upon the world as a huge big play-house. That is the time to develop a sense of robust optimism. That is the time when sickly germs which breed the superiority complex,

isolation and exclusiveness and mis-appropriation can be more or less successfully knocked out of the system. The period of youth is necessary—absolutely necessary for the growth of the individual himself and also for the benefit of society. The period of youth acts as a blessing to the individual by leading him into these rare and useful experiences and society gets its best entertainment from its youth. Often speakers and orators from the stage and platform proclaim that the youth form the very back-bone of our society; the youth of today becomes the leader of tomorrow and the destinies of poor Mother India are in the hands of the youth. It is all well and good and the said speakers and orators get thunderous claps for expressing such glorious views. The question however is, are there any youths in Hindu Society? Does our system of marriage and our conception of married life recognize any such period of youthful existence in our youngmen?

Life with us is divided into four stages—*balya, youana, koumara* and *vardhakya*. *Youana*, I think, corresponds more or less to the period of youth. *Koumara*, I am told, is connected with *kumaras* and *kumaries* i. e. children. *Kumara dasa* starts therefore with children. Now comes the difficulty. The average Indian is married between 14 and 16, begets children at 18 and becomes a grandfather between 32 and 34. His *koumara dasa* therefore starts at 18 or say 20. I hope I shall not be very wrong if I consider that *balya dasa* will be finished by 14. According to the Madras Children Act of 1920, a child means a person under the age of 14 years. Thus, we have a period of nearly four years or at the most five years to youth or *youana avastha*. Giving a grace of four years more, this period is only for a term of ten years, seven of which will have to be deducted for sleep, food and other calls. That leaves us a glorious period of three years to gain all the wonderful experiences of youth. Is not Girisam justified in deploring the absence of maidens in our country. His omission to refer to the male denomination, specially, may have been due to his anxiety not to offend the feelings of boys.

No Wall between this World and the Other

I believe Girisam has illustrated to us several kinds of waste which may have been reckoned by him in his famous lecture: (1) waste of money (2) waste of time (3) waste of artistic talents (4) waste of powers of intellection (5) waste of emotions (6) waste of charity (7) waste of youthful existence (8) waste of breath and (9) waste of physical energies in general.

I have no doubt whatever that Girisam believed firmly that the prime cause for all this huge waste lay in an unnatural and impracticable conception of life.

I am not at all inclined to perceive any blasphemy in his statement that pleasures in heaven are assured if you have already enjoyed them in this world. It is true to me. I cannot conceive of any Chinese wall dividing this world from the other worlds, including heaven. No truer statement was ever made than the one that the mind is its own place. It makes a heaven of hell and hell of heaven. Turn the kaliedoscope; earth is seen. Turn it again, heaven is visible. No change of places at all. The turning is in our power. I am afraid that as long as one concentrates on a heaven which is far away somewhere, one can never be satisfied with this world, which would be an insult to the impartiality of the maker of these globes. Happiness or joy may be considered as an easementary right. Long open continuous and uninterrupted enjoyment as right establishes a right of way. Happiness must be openly and continuously enjoyed as of right and in an uninterrupted manner in this world, so that we acquire inviolable rights to enjoy *ananda,* after we have shuffled off this mortal coil. The key to the definition of such happiness lies in the two words; uninterrupted and as of right. Interruption comes in only when there is a break or cessation. In *ananda* this cessation is ordinarily the outcome of fatigue or, may be, regret. Uninterrupted enjoyment of *ananda* may therefore refer to such *ananda* as containing no elements of reaction or regret in it. Let me consider the other expression 'as of right'. The *sukha* or *ananda* should be enjoyed 'as of right'. That is possible only

for one who considers *ananda* as his birth right—as his nature. In other words one would feel happy always, unconsciously radiate happiness all round just as a rose which would always smell sweet and distribute its sweet smell all round. According to Girisam therefore this world is meant to give such pleasures and a person who can find and enjoy such pleasures does establish a right of easement for happiness in the other worlds. This outlook of life in this world welcomes *samsara* and does not condemn it. It is a strongman's outlook. Fear and weakness dare not approach it. It certainly discourages beggary. Begging for admissions, begging for appointments, begging for engagements and begging even to remain yours truly. Conception of such a life and the determination to live up to it require the development of one's will power. Girisam's series of exploits indicate that he was a man of great will power and he ever kept the power in perfect trim. The final scene proves his wonderful self-possession. To me Girisam was not defeated. In the last scene, at considerable self-sacrifice, he let us into the secret of the great Saujanya Rao Pantulu's weakness. That paragon of virtues, lover of truth, upholder of justice and friend of the oppressed cannot after all get over certain sentimental prejudices. The Pantulu deems as a contamination the very touch and the very atmosphere of a streetwalker. With great reluctance he unbends to bestow a kiss upon that noble woman who was pure and good at heart. Between the Pantulu and Madhuravani I take my hat off to Madhuravani. I thank Girisam for bringing about this denouement, for I believe Girisam deliberately continued to get this effect. If he was sensuous and selfish, he need not have re-appeared after he eloped with Bachamma. He would have married her and stayed where he was. Some evil-minded persons may say that Girisam took the best and coveted the adoption. I do not believe it. He knew enough law to file a suit for the *stridhanam* properties of Buchamma. I am sure Girisam did not want to marry Buchamma. In his heart of hearts, he knew that marriage would come in the way of his service. He carried her away to expose certain dangers which lurk in our society. And he came back to mock at society by

showing up that even its great Sanjanya Rao Pantulu was full of prejudices which breed divisions and stand against the principles of equality and freedom in society.

Now, gentlemen, I have tried my best and I have been able to imagine 10 causes of waste (including the waste of will power which I have indicated last) which very probably formed the subject-matter of Girisam's lecture. You know Girisam better than I. Consequently you will be in a position to teach me something more about him. I am ready to learn.

It is true I could not think of the eleventh cause; but I have a suspicion what it is.

Girisam is the main character in the play 'Kanyasulkam' (Bride's price) written by Sri Gurajada Appa Rao (1861–1915). Sri Appa Rao, a champion of the spoken Telugu, wrote poetry and plays as models. The play 'Kanyasulkam', written in 1892, established him as a great playwright in Telugu.

This lecture was delivered by Raghava at the Andhra University, in 1934.

Letters from the West

The Englishman's table conventions are interesting. They indicate certain principles of *maya* which is necessary, as you know, for the exercise of the mind. The lessons may be rudimentary, yet are appropriate for the psychology of a child's mind. Conventions are a part of social life. To such beings as live in society and can see no further than beyond themselves, convention becomes an instrument of fear. Gradually, they would slip down into the shades of superstition, ignorance, cowardice and sin. However, convention by itself is a necessary institution just as image-worship is.

First you have to dress properly for dinner (which is the important meal). This dressing corresponds to the Indian Brahmin's *madi*. The difference in style is due to the difference in climate. You have to sit with ease and elegance within the limits of your chair. The forearms and hands should be manipulated dexterously and gracefully; else you will spill things and get into your neighbour's way. It certainly teaches one an artistic way of displaying one's movements. You have to know something of the art of cooking, for you have to assort and mix the several ingredients yourself before the dish becomes agreeable. You help yourself when the course is served, which again is a feat of gentle art. You have to do it without disturbing the artistic effect of the service. You should keep its appearance aggreeable to your neighbour. You should now and again consult your neighbour's wants and help him in a pleasant manner, passing the salt, the sugar, the mustard and sauce. Then you have to know the nature and purpose of the several instruments on the table. There are the fish-knife, the butter-knife and the meat-knife. The fish-fork is different from the meat-fork. The fork and knife for eating are different. The

plates themselves are different for different dishes; the spoons are different. Salt should be taken in a particular way; sugar in a different way. Then you have to eat with ease, without making any noise or producing hair-raising sounds. To drink at the table is art again. The glasses are different. Water glass, wine glass and whisky glass are all different. And you should not soil your self or the white table cloth. It is immaculate and so is the waiter who serves you with gloved hands. Your behaviour and operations should be in tune with the colour scheme, so exquisitely arranged, overflowing with the milk of cleanliness. Do you know what concentration of mind it requires? what will-power? what faculties? a knowledge of cutlery, crockery, cookery, jugglery, skill in acrobatic feats, washing, serving, and grace in everything you do. Above all, you have to be pleasant and agreeable to your neighbours. You should engage them in light refined conversation. You cannot shout. You have to modulate your voice to a key which harmonizes with the subdued and gently audible clatter of the knives and forks. You will be styled a 'drag' if you cannot make yourself entertaining. What an exercise for the mind? There are people who almost think that 'eating' is a necessary 'evil' to maintain body and life, and you can eat in any manner you choose as long as you do not overdo the ceremony. It may be so for one who always thinks in terms of the world and not of his own self. To the average man, however, eating is an important factor. The cravings of nature are all intrinsically noble and they should be satisfied in a noble manner. Elegance and art are the bed-rocks of nobility.

I quite realize that this art may eventually become a habit. That is the danger-zone. To those who conform to the code of convention out of fear, habit becomes a positive danger. It leads them to superstition and ignorance. To them the spilling of salt is a bad omen. To those, however, who are not the slaves of habit, convention is an instrument of love. I found quite a useful source of education in the table conventions of the West.

II

I understand the development of the modern English stage. It is the painting of life as it is–in its naked beauty and consequently its naked ugliness. The bogs and marshes which are kept so religiously covered by the cloak of modern society are all ruthlessy betrayed. The havoc played by unbridled and never-dying primordial passions and desires, are hittingly brought into relief. The loathsome toiling of modern life, behind an apparently respectable conventional front, is exposed with a callousness which is a blend of a sneer and a twinkle. The utter helplessness of society, culture and civilization in the face of facts is painted. The eternal *verities* are sung to a tragic tune and the vision of a beyond or the idea of eternal justice as unrefined burlesque. The great problems which are the natural outcome of the necessary existence of inequalities are reckoned in a most scientific and clear headed manner. So far the Englishman has the advantage over the Indian. The latter, as you know, instinctively draws his head (like the tortoise) at the hint of any difficulty or any struggle.

Let me come back to the stage. The bewildering confusion caused in the fashionable and artistically laid-out streets of society's life by the wild careering of the beasts of the lower self, the fierce revolt of all natural instincts against the schemes laid by man's avarice and possessive instinct; the harsh and triumphant cry of nemesis and retribution drinking the very blood of tyrannical selfishness; the cynical smile of subterfuge in helping the natural cravings to surreptitiously open the windows and doors of Dame Convention and fly away; the innocence of crime, the chastity of the prostitute; the morality of the liar, the injustice of law, the unrighteousness of punishment–all these are attempted to be portrayed with a vividness as true as painful. It is life as it is – Realism in Excelcis—and then there is nothing beyond—it is *nirvana*—the audience goes home realizing how hopeless men and women are in the maelstrom of life's currents.

I found the acting good, the plot holds you with a thrill. The environment is superb; but I felt a vague sense of disap-

pointment. It is true I had seen life's current. I want to enjoy my bath and must find a way to swim in the current and not be drifted by it.

Why does the stage leave the problems unsolved? Why should it dread to refer its problems to the Great Influence, which fills all? Is it a shame to believe in a final adjustment? Is it a weakness to believe in a happy end?

I find that God is reckoned only as a creative principle. Perhaps the principle of destruction is admitted. But the maintaining principle, the protecting principle, is only a fairy tale. To believe in a god who is responsible for order, law and justice appears to be an old, a very old fashion. The modern culture has dismissed God.

It may have its advantage and distinguished look; but the picture presented by the stage is somehow to my mind incomplete.

III

There is a very great need at the present day for broadcasting our ancient Vedic discoveries, truths and culture to the young Hindu. This is a dire need. The present system of education is making the young Hindu worse than useless. I came across a number of Indian students in the West. There are some who keep to their orthodox ways and talk to you of the great Indian past without having any the least idea of where the greatness lay. There are others who are faithful carbon paper editions of the Western drawing-room etiquette of the class below the lower middle-class, who are scrupulous about their dress-suit for dinner, who drink beer, take their landlady's daughter to see the pictures, cultivate the discarded catch expressions of the pavements and consider themselves as equal to Europeans. Their idea of Western culture is a certain kind of swagger furtively peeping into insolence. They must address a friend as an old man. They will tell you that Indian music is rotten, at the

same time confess their ignorance of the great masters of India. They will tell you that the Ayurvedic system of medicine is ignorance. They will tell you that your system of bathing, dressing and eating is barbarian. They will refuse to converse with you in any language but the English. One of them told me seriously that it is only beef-eating and driving away of all religions that can make India respectable. I asked him what he meant by religion. Of course he was confused. I don't blame this young man. They have no real Indian education and they are dazzled by the material glamour and happiness of the West. The natural result is that the majority honestly believe that India's salvation consists in complete westernization. And a few others instinctively antagonistic to Western influences, good or bad, are however unable to go farther than proclaiming a blind abmiration for the ancient past. Is it not time to start a vigorous campaign for placing the real good of ancient Indian culture before our young men? It is now high time to tell our young men that according to our ancients, religion was merely knowledge and realization of the great truth that God is in every person, working through all hands, walking through all feet, eating through every mouth and thinking in every mind. Without this concept, how can the grand idea of the universal brotherhood of man (which lies at the root of all progressively humanitarian movements) be possible? This religious knowledge is essential for our everyday life, whether engaged in social functions, politics or playgrounds. Is it not high time to reveal to our young men the sublime place music occupied in ancient aryan education and the transcendental reach of its sphere? Is it not time to disclose to them the strictly scientific and hygenic principles that are at the bottom of the Indian dress and Indian food in ancient days?

I can see where the mistake lies. The Western-educated young man is obsessed by the putrid accretions and excrescenses which have grown on the Indian skin. It is therefore necessary and immediately too, to give our young men an insight into the

original stuff which was, and is, pure gold, and encourage them to scour away the unwholesome outgrowth.

Originaliy Published in 'Triveni' in 1928

Art and the People

People say that the old order has changed. A friend of mine tells me that now he walks with his head thrown back a little, his chest thrown forward a bit, and the air he breathes feels a little more bracing than before. It is true that there appears to be a general bustle of packing and unpacking round about, and a movement which sings the song of "Go ahead." The chain is still there; but I feel that the orbit of movement is a bit widened. The parole still binds but the ray of freedom is distinctly sighted in the distance. A good deal of struggle is necessary to reach it. Perfect discipline should be maintained, for it is a movement of the millions. Food and strength, endurance and non-violence are required to overcome the side-tracking demons. Plenty of self-confidence is necessary to achieve success.

The millions have been deprived of their freedom of thought and action for centuries. Alien philosophy and alien culture, backed by alien rule, have coloured us with the inferiority complex out and out. Our arts and aspirations have almost ceased to grow for a thousand years or more, owing to lack of proper nourishment. The vile fingers of a degenerate priest-craft started the strangulation game. *Sri Krishna* used his *chakra* (discus) to cover the light of the day, and *Arjuna* might kill *Saindhava*. Priest-craft hid the light of the day from our masses that they may be bled to feed the high and the mighty. The noose devised by the priest-craft was for obvious reasons taken advantage of by the invaders. It was unfortunate that the narrow-minded puritanism of some of the invaders destroyed our fine-arts. Self-expression was choked. The creative instinct was almost killed. The mind was starved. The multitude walked about without cheer and almost without hope. Slave

mentality took possession of the people. It is not bread alone that sustains man. He requires freedom to grow and discover himself. It is the freedom of the mind that fertilizes the creative capacity in him and helps him to achieve the glory of unrestricted self-expression. The bigotry of the priest-craft on one side, the tyranny of alien philosophy on the second side, the distortion of educational ideals by the government on the third side, and the deplorable selfishness of the home-made imperialist on the fourth, succeeded in extinguishing the fire of freedom. This has gone on for centuries. We are now in a sorry plight indeed. The true artistic spark in us is eternal; but it is buried under heaps and heaps of the ashes of superstition and ignorance.

It is the duty of society and much more so of the government to discover that spark in our millions and revive the same. That would pave the way for artistic and cultural progress. Such progress, however, depends to a large extent on a careful and scientific disciplining and development of emotional nature. The true aim of art is to construct a *setu* (bridge) between the seen and the unseen, by patiently trying to interpret the natural as well as the supernatural by the very effective method of identifying oneself with nature in all its aspects. The manhood in man and the womanhood in woman can be realized only when the desire for art and beauty is awakened in them. With such awakening, a raging impetus to rush forward to the portals of the aesthetic world naturally takes possession of the initiate. Then a keen desire to travel through the world of emotions is created.

Bertrand Russell says that it is only through a life of imagination man becomes aware of what the world might be and that, without it, progress would become mechanical and trivial. It is necessary therefore that a human being, in order to rise above a mechanized existence, should enjoy a life of imagination and travel through the world of emotions. The fine-arts therefore assume great importance in the scheme of education. On a careful analysis of all the several kinds of human urges, it is easy

to conclude that the urge to strive after the useful and the urge to strive after the beautiful do unite to produce the same results, viz. the growth of man and the progress of society. Both urges find abundant nourishment in the world of emotions, which exist to teach people how to assign their proper values to pleasure and pain and to reach the portals of the higher life.

A travel, therefore, through the world of emotions is essential for the progress of man. Such a travel, however, requires careful equipment before the journey starts. Mysterious are its labyrinthine passages and turnings. It is like the famous *padma vyuha* which engulfed *Abhimanyu,* because he knew to get into it only, and not how to get out of it. The physical limitations of a human being easily mislead him to assign wrong values to the artistic environment which he finds in this mysterious world. He begins to cling to things. He should therefore be taught to break away from things before he starts on his journey through the aesthetic world. It is this capacity to break away from things that can give him glimpses of a still higher and spiritual life.

The traveller should consequently be educated by a loving heart and guided by a firm hand. A correct taste for music, painting, the stage and such other things should be instilled into him at the very outset. Love of music and love of the fine-arts in general are inherent in the make-up of all human beings. It is quite natural for a human being to turn to music and the stage for enjoyment as it is natural for him to seek food. Food for the mind should be more carefully chosen than the food for the body. Indulgence in bad food for the body results in indigestion and the weakening of the physical condition. Similarly indulgence in bad food for the mind impairs its development and arrests its expansion. A society which cannot provide proper food for the development of man's mind cannot be said to be functioning healthily.

The present-day places of amusement, especially the stage and the cinema, stupefy man's mind instead of developing it.

Every intelligent Indian feels it; but he is unable to help the situation. The love of stories from the *Mahabharata, Bhagavata* and *Ramayana* runs in the very blood of the Hindus. Consequently, the poor villager rushes from far and near to the stage or the screen, to see his old heroes of the epics. Money is spent for it, and what is the return he gets for all his pains? Unwholesome caricatures are served as food. The veriest apology for a human being appears on the stage or the screen as *Vishnu, Siva, Rama, Narada, Anjaneya* or any one of those several mythological beings connected with the stories of our puranic gods; and at once the auditorium reaches the boiling point of enthusiasm with wild cheers and clapping of hands. The man or woman who presents the mythological part may look like a gargoyle, may bellow like a bull, or may sing like a cat with catarrah-but the audience has no eye or ear for such defects. The villager appears to be satisfied because he is predisposed in favour of his heroes; and the garb in which the said heroes appear on the screen cannot shake the villager's love for them. I am reminded of what a friend of mine once told me, that he could relish any bad coffee, because he could, while swallowing the bad coffee, imagine and enjoy the taste of a good cup of coffee he had had once before. The exploiter, in whose hands the entire business of the screen and the stage now rests, trades upon this simple yet glorious element of faith in the poor villager. The exploiter grows opulent and corpulent, while the villager sticks to his quagmire of superstition. I am afraid, most of our so-called educated people as well are sailing in the same boat. Would it not be worthwhile to give a new interpretation—a more rational and intelligent interpretation—and thus enlighten the masses to perceive a better and freer life, free from all shackles of superstition and ignorance? In my humble opinion, this could be easily done and the love of the epics itself be shaped into a dynamic force for the cultural progress of our masses.

Did I say that it is rumoured that the old order has changed? Yes, the new order is facing grim facts. Its look is concentrated on the dumb millions who are ill-clothed, almost nil fed and

suffering mutely. The first step is undoubtedly to find food and clothes for them, and to free them, from the toils of indebtedness. Simultaneously, however, their mental possessions should be enlarged and they should be taught to develop a life of imagination to appreciate the glory of life. This item should be considered in the reorganization scheme. The idea of education as a means to procure passes—pure and simple—should be knocked on the head. The present system of education has played havoc upon the finished product as well. It is so costly that 95 per cent of the parents must sell their lands like Rodreigo, to help their sons to win the love of educational Desdemonas. After the career in the schools and colleges is finished, the race for appointments starts. This is a veritable sack and hurdle race. At the winning post stand the commissioners of communalism. Even after winning, the educated young man starts life with starving children clinging to his side, clamorous creditors clogging his foot-steps and the restless demon of insecurity prodding him from behind. He finds that he has no cheer in life. He cannot equip himself with the requisite mental possession to create an atmosphere of cheer amidst any surronudings, for the simple reason that the education he has received is only of the *rasam-sadam* (Indian equivalent for bread and butter) type. He runs into debt recklessly, begets children heedlessly, and cries to all the 33 crores of gods to help him, in vain. I am afraid this is the type of life which thousands of our so-called educated young men are obliged to lead. A thorough reorganization therefore is necessary. A small digression here may be pardoned. The government will have to consider not twice but twenty times before the salaries of the teaching staff are cut. To deny decent food to the very people who have to provide food (mental, moral and intellectual) for the young mind may not be a wise policy.

No reorganization scheme however could be complete without reckoning the factor of the masses. The idea of a mass contact can become successful only by having institutions for educating and developing the minds of the masses. The minds

of the masses should be educated and elevated to shun vulgar superstitions, despise gross habits like drink, cultivate a sense of proportion to avoid waste, and lastly to keep themselves clear from the poisonous contamination of indebtedness. I believe that this can best be done by provoking the real artistic talent which is inherent in the mass-mind.

Art and simplicity go together. Good music and good pictures conduce considerably to plain living and high thinking. There may be exceptional cases. Let us ignore them. Drama teaches the lesson of self-control. Books and schools may give the student glimpses of a beautiful life, but it is the fine-arts that can enable him to enjoy that life and thereby lead him to the heights of a triumphant life, the life of the spirit. Schools are necessary, and so are places of instruction, where the mass-mind can be taught to realize a correct taste for good art. It is a fact that at present our theatres and picture-houses by themselves occupy a prominent place in our world of art. The government could easily obtain facts and figures to discover how much public money is spent on them. It is a considerable amount, though not as big as the amount that is spent on drink. Is it not the duty of the government to ascertain whether these theatres and cinemas are really places for the development of the minds of the masses, or really toddy shops for the stupefaction of them? To take cudgels against such places where the minds of the masses are deliberately stupefied is as necessary as to take cudgels against toddy shops, becuse both the places cater only to the lower half of the human being, not to mention their rousing criminal instincts in him.

It is well known that the original purpose of our drama was to impart knowledge to the masses in a kindergarten fashion, for provoking thoughts in them, for holding up a mirror to society that it may correct its errors and for inculcating principles of detachment in the actor as well as in the spectator. In the ancient days they were veritable halls of instruction and gave strength to the finer threads of the human fabric. The present

state of affairs is regrettable. Without fear of any challenge it can be said now that our theatres and picture-halls exist only for the benefit of the exploiter and for obscurantism The toddy producer is a saint compared to most of our drama producers at present. The sooner the government attends to this matter and reforms our theatres and cinema halls for the production of dramas of real artistic and real educational value, the better it will be for the progress of our masses.

The schools and colleges are generally beyond the reach of the masses. Theatres and cinemas can admirably complement such work for the benefit of the masses. The problem of adult education in villages will not then present formidable difficulties. After all, the cost of such a task to the government may not be noticeable.

When the mass-mind wakens to the bugle call of real art, the millions will get ready for the onward march with an ennobled and purified outlook. They will shed all that spelt vulgarity, all that made them heavy and unwieldy. Drink and an inartistic life would be abandoned. Clothes of ignominy would be flung far away, and khaddar and Swadeshi (flowers of artistic toil) would be worn in glory and splendour. All burdens including debts would be avoided, for the hiker trekking forward would choose to throw off the ever-expanding load of debt. Art would teach the marching soldiers to simplify their lives and help them above want. They would regain the courage which lies buried under centuries of poverty and indebtedness. Then the march forward would be a resplendent cultural progress of the Indian nation.

In my humble opinion every Union, every Municipality, and every District Board should encourage a theatre or a cinema-hall which can afford to place goods of real artistic and educational value within the easy reach of our villagers. In short, the government must definitely recognize that our theatres and cinema-halls are regular places of instruction to the masses,

and with a firm hand start the work of their reformation. Bad art must go. No producer should be allowed to take the people's money by catering to their ignorance and depravity. The globe is a planet travelling round the sun to our students in schools. But the play wright insists on demonstrating to the masses that the earth is flat and rests upon a giant snake. Wholesome moral precepts are taught in schools, but the student goes to the theatre and cinema to learn that our very gods and heroes indulge in acts of indecent behaviour, rape and what not. I have no hesitation in saying that our present places of entertainment are proving obstacles in the way of the progress of the masses. I know there is a school of thought, which stands up for entertainment and recreation for their own sake. It is true that a human being requires recreation, but be it noticed that the very word suggests that one should feel re-created after it, i.e., re-equipped for better work. The word 'entertainment' is as misunderstood as the word 'pleasure'. Are we prepared to accept a tickling of the lower sense as entertainment? Could a representation of the unnatural and the grostesque be called real entertainment? They may be funny for a time. The question, however, is whether our poverty stricken country and our poor villagers can afford to waste money over such things. Mahatmaji's eye is now turned towards the race-course and the gambling hall. Why not our Premier's eye turn towards the picture palace?

Originally Published in 'Triveni' in 1929